Developing a media education program for infant children

by

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For Michael and Yasmin,

and

my mother, Joan Harrison

Certification of the originality of the research

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or graduate diploma in any tertiary institution and to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Kaylene Margaret Chung

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to determine whether four-to-eight year old children need media education. The thesis is that media education may help reduce or counteract the negative influences of the media and as such is derived from the protectionistic "impact mediation model" of television literacy. Using a psycho-sociological research framework this study aims to achieve an increased understanding of the impact of a wide range of entertainment media on infant children's everyday experiences.

The research blends together conventional quantitative methods of data gathering and alternative qualitative data-gathering approaches. Parental and teacher perceptions of four-to-eight year old children's relationship with the entertainment media were obtained using a questionnaire. Infant children were interviewed individually or in small groups using a structured interview schedule. In addition, infant children were observed in their normal home environment while viewing regular television programs and a choice of two prescribed videos.

The main findings of the study are: that infant children are frightened by all forms of entertainment media, although the electronic audio-visual media are more likely to induce fears than other forms of media; media education does not reduce children's media fears; most children had a good understanding of television's representation of reality and fantasy; media education did not help younger children differentiate between advertisements and television programs; children in this study did not imitate the antisocial content of television and other media - according to parents, teachers and self-reports. The need for media education - based on the media effects model, was questioned.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The most savage controversies are about those matters as to which there is no good evidence either way.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

The objective of this study is to determine whether there is a need for media education for infant children. In 1948 - even before television arrived in Australian homes - Lewis called for television instruction for students of all levels (Anderson, 1983, p. 297-298). According to Anderson, the early television literacy programs utilised many of the concepts and approaches from teaching about films and radio. He also said that although there were plenty of articles about the use of television, no real curriculum existed. It was not until the early 1970s that the first published television literacy program was released in America. This work concentrated on children in elementary grades and secondary schools, and little research or media curriculum development was carried out in relation to infant children.

More recently, Singer, Zuckerman and Singer (1981) developed, implemented and evaluated a television curriculum for elementary school children in America. They found that children who had received the television curriculum were much better informed about television than children who had not received any television instruction.

In Australia, media education is a relatively new phenomenon in the primary school. Brother Kelvin Canavan (of the Sydney Catholic Education Office) was amongst the foremost writers and curriculum developers on mass media education for young children in Australia. In 1975 Canavan said:

> *The time has come to introduce into the primary and secondary schools of Australia a new subject that recognises the role of the mass media in our society and aims to help students in all years to be appreciative, discriminating and critical listeners, viewers and readers. This new subject may appropriately be called 'Mass Media Education'.* (1975, p.1).

Canavan's rationale for introducing mass media education into schools was based on several significant factors relating to the influence of the mass media. In addition to a decree made by the Vatican Council and requests arising from the Bishops Conference in 1972, Canavan noted five other factors he saw as reasons for the introduction of mass media education in Australian Catholic schools: (1) research evidence highlighting the pervasiveness of the mass media; (2) empirical evidence relating to the impact of the mass media on the society; (3) the growth of media industry in Australia; (4) the inability of parents to provide appropriate media education in the home; and (5) the desire to introduce new areas of interest to the curriculum.

In 1978 the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts released its inquiry into the impact of television on the development and learning behaviour of children. A total of 274 submissions were received from a wide cross-section of the community (teachers, parents, educationalists, psychologists, researchers, medical profession, church groups, and children's television groups). The majority expressed disquiet or dissatisfaction about children's television (Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, 1978, p. 12). In its summary of findings relating to television's effects on children, the Committee noted that:

(a) television was the dominant experience in Australian children's lives, often displacing other activities;
(b) empirical evidence and community concern had made a convincing case for the reduction of the level of violence on television;
(c) stereotyping and unreal life-styles may have harmful effects on children;
(d) there was concern regarding the impact of television on children's learning behaviour.

Some of the evidence presented to the Committee was based on overseas research findings that may not be relevant to the Australian cultural situation - a point made by the Committee themselves. Also, a neurophysiological effect postulated by F.E. and M. Emery, suggesting that the television signal produced a temporary numbing of the left hemisphere of the brain, was later investigated and refuted, according to the Committee. Yet on the basis of the evidence presented, the Committee concluded that there was sufficient evidence to strongly support the concept of media education.

Furthermore, the recommendation was based on reports about the effects of **television** - and said nothing about the effects of other media. The report gave no indication about what the basis of media education should be; and after several years, the Committee noted that few initiatives had been taken in the area of media education.

In recent years, several states have embarked on media education curriculum development for primary and secondary students. Little research has been carried out to determine the basis for media education activities, and infant children have been largely ignored.

This thesis investigates the hypothesis that infant children are more in need of media education than any other group of children because they do not have the ability to understand the media messages. There are some arguments that seem to favour this hypothesis.

Unlike older children and adults, infant children bring few skills to the media situation. They have limited cognitive, social and emotional skills, and during this critical period of socialization they consciously and unconsciously seek to develop such skills. They are extremely vulnerable. Their behaviour is influenced by internal characteristics such as moods, personality, and health, as well as external characteristics such as parental attitudes, friends, and the environment - including the variety of types of media to which they are exposed.

During infancy and early childhood, reality and fantasy are interwoven. Young children are immersed in a world of fairytales and fantasy characters in their storytelling and imaginative play. It is also a time when they are learning about the world through imitation and experimentation. Most children have little knowledge or experience of danger, injury or death. The combination of these factors together with the mass media's ability to present fantasy material as reality, makes infant children vulnerable to mass media messages.

This research acknowledges that infant children use a variety of entertainment media (television, video, cinema, storybooks, audio cassette tapes and live drama) and that each of these have the potential to influence their behaviour, beliefs and emotions. The study therefore seeks to find out in what ways different media affect children. It assumes that if children are affected by all of the entertainment media, then perhaps we should introduce multi-media education - rather than media education based on the nature and content of television - as has been the case.

The study is limited to the four to eight year age group, and therefore may not be applicable to other age/stage groups; limited to the Australian context, and therefore may not be generalisable to other cultural contexts unless there are common factors in operation.

The value of this study

The study is important because it not only expands the body of communication research in Australia and overseas, but also develops a much needed foundation in media education theory for early childhood educators. This study comes at a time when media education curriculum is slowly being developed in primary and secondary schools throughout Australia. It also comes at a time when public interest in media effects on its audience is intense. Over the past few years numerous media education texts have emerged for secondary school and tertiary use, but there has been little interest or attention paid to infant children's needs.

In summary, the need for this is based on the following conclusions:

(a) there is a lack of empirical research, particularly in Australia, concerning the need for media education for infant children;

(b) there is a paucity of worldwide research into infant children's use of the entertainment media collectively;

(c) there is a need continually to research and monitor children's use of mass media, and any subsequent effects that the media may have on its audience, because of the media's changing content and structure and the changes in society;

(d) infant children have a right to be protected from adverse media influences; and

(e) there is a need to respond to continuing public concern about the mass media.

Definition of Terms

These terms are used throughout the thesis and the definitions given are provided for clarity and consistency.

1.1 Infants

An infant, as reported in this study, is a young school child under (and including) the age of eight years. In Tasmanian schools children from Kindergarten to Grade 2 are enrolled in infant school or early childhood classes. Children in these classes or grades are generally between the ages of four and eight years.

1.2 Mass Media

In general terms 'mass' refers to *a large amount or number, such as a great body of people* (Collins, 1986, p. 947) but when applied to media the term refers to the wide circulation of media products (e.g. television programs, newspapers, radio programs) simultaneously utilised by a large, widely dispersed, differentiated audience.

Videos, books, records, telephone, facsimile, telex, computers although having large audiences, do not belong to the mass media, because they are not utilized simultaneously, but tend to be used over periods of time. In the context of this study 'mass media' refers to the communication technology or media products, that deliver messages simultaneously to large numbers of the population.

1.3 Media Education

In their discussion of the concept of education Bowen and Hobson (1974) make the distinction between 'formal' education (school-type education that is planned and sequenced) and 'informal' education as a result of the influence of unplanned, random experiences within the environment. The media may also - like school and community

- offer both formal and informal education. For example, television brings mathematics, language and music lessons to the school classroom as part of the formal education process. Informally - according to various commentators - television has been responsible for providing viewers with moral and aesthetic education (Thompson, 1964); sex role behaviour, attitude change and consumerism (Greenfield, 1984); and for the elimination of children's culture (Postman, 1985). The informal education received via the media has been referred to as 'effects' and has sometimes been considered detrimental. For the purposes of this research, the term 'media education' is used in the formal context, although there is considerable confusion over the term, as is pointed out in Chapter 3.

Media education as used in this study is the deliberate act or process of acquiring awareness and knowledge about the media, its products, processes and audience effects through planned and sequential activities. In this respect, media education involves active participation in activities to learn about the media rather than passively learning as a result of exposure to the contents of media products.

1.4 Media

In the literature, few researchers have defined the term 'media' although their usage of the term implies that media refers to the communication technology or agency. For example, the terms media and medium are used to refer to items such as: print, radio television, video games and computers (Greenfield, 1984; McLuhan, 1964; Snow, 1983; McQuail, 1987; Williams, Rice and Rogers, 1988 and others).

When the term media is used in this thesis it refers to the communication technology that delivers the means of communication e.g. television, cinema, radio, newspaper, books etc. In this sense media are 'sign systems' as referred to by Williams (1976, p. 169) and Masterman (1985, p. 20).

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 establishes the research area and the necessity for research into infant children's use of the entertainment media in relation to determining whether there is a need for media education for infants. It also defines some basic terms that have been discussed throughout the thesis.

In Chapters 2 and 3 previous research is presented and discussed in order to establish a psychological and educational framework that is appropriate for a study into developing media education for infant children. Chapter 2 reviews the literature that has contributed to the body of knowledge pertaining to media effects on the viewer. In Chapter 3 media education courses are reviewed, with particular emphasis on early childhood education and the state of media education in Australia.

Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical framework for this study and Chapter 5 presents the methodology used in Part A of this study. The research framework is based on the theoretical findings as presented in chapters2 and 3.

Chapter 6 discusses the results of Part A of the study and has been divided into five parts, corresponding to the sections in the questionnaires, followed by a section that synthesises the results. Chapter 7 analyses the child-observations in terms of the emotional arousal of children when viewing television and video in their own home, and Chapter 8 synthesises the findings of Part A of the study.

Chapter 9 outlines the methodology of Part B of the study which was designed to trial a sample of media education activities with infant children in two southern Tasmanian schools. The activities were based on the findings of Part A of the study. Chapter 9 also presents the evaluation of the media education program implemented in the two schools. Limitations of Part B of the study are discussed. Chapter 10 presents the conclusion to the study and includes suggested avenues for further research.

Each chapter is preceded by an introduction and a list of sub-topics, and ends with a summary of important points or issues. Chapters2 and 3 (the literature review) also contain synthesising paragraphs, which aim to draw material together throughout these more lengthy chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the nature of the research reported upon in this thesis, as well as providing a rationale of the study reported herein. It highlights the need for research into infant children's understanding of the entertainment media as a basis for

developing media education. The importance of research within an Australian cultural environment is acknowledged.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: (i) Media Effects on Young Children

Childhood is the kingdom where no one dies.
- Edna St. Vincent Millay, title of poem in **Wine from these Grapes.**

Introduction

The assumption that media education may be able to counteract the negative influences of the media is consistent with Anderson's (1983) impact mediation model of television literacy. According to Anderson the impact mediation model is derived from the experimental media effects research in that the content is based on media problem areas such as violence on television, advertising, children's television diet, etc. The model is protectionistic in terms of its approach and has an anticipated therapeutic outcome.

This research is based on the mediation model. It will begin by examining literature about media effects on children in an attempt to answer the question posed in Chapter 1: Is media education necessary for infant children?

From scanning the literature it was evident that the media - particularly television - had been extensively studied. Research about the impact of television covered topics such as children's social development, perception of reality, morality, physical health, imitative behaviour - particularly in relation to violence, intellectual development, stereotyped sex-role attitudes, emotional development, etc. Any one of these areas would provide scope for a Ph. D. thesis, but researched in isolation they could not contribute a great deal to the development of media education. It was therefore decided to concentrate on three research areas - each of which had received intense research interest, especially in relation to television. These areas are: (a) children's media-

influenced imitative behaviour; (b) children's understanding of the media; and (c) children's fear responses to the media.

In this chapter these three topics are reviewed. However several points should be borne in mind when interpreting the significance of the literature reviewed in this chapter:

1. Many other areas of research, such as those listed above could also have been discussed, but because of the vast amount of literature on the media's effects on children, it was decided to limit the literature review to three areas of concern.

2. Australian research into the effects of television and other entertainment media on infant children is meagre and therefore it has been necessary to refer to overseas examples, in particular studies carried out in the United States, where most of the television effects research originates. However, in saying this, it must be stressed that evidence presented from cross-cultural research does not necessarily imply that the same situation applies in Australia.

3. Early research into media effects was primarily based on experimental laboratory studies, often involving small numbers of children, and based on weak methodology; it therefore needs to be interpreted cautiously.

The chapter has been organized into four sections, each of which discuss specific media effects. They are:

1. Children's media use
2. Children's understanding of media reality and fantasy
3. Children's imitative use of the media
4. Children's fear reactions to the media

1. Children's media use

In chapter 1 (page 4) it was acknowledged that infant children use and may be influenced by a variety of entertainment media. Television, video, cinema, storybooks, audio cassette tapes and live drama were identified as popular entertainment media utilised by four-to-eight year old children. To put this study into perspective it is

necessary to identify how much time infant children are actually spending with the media.

Few studies have investigated children's time spent with a wide range of media, but Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) provided information regarding children's comparative use of several different forms of media. They found that compared with television, young children spend little time using other forms of media. Figure 2.1 below illustrates the percentage of children using different types of media at different ages.

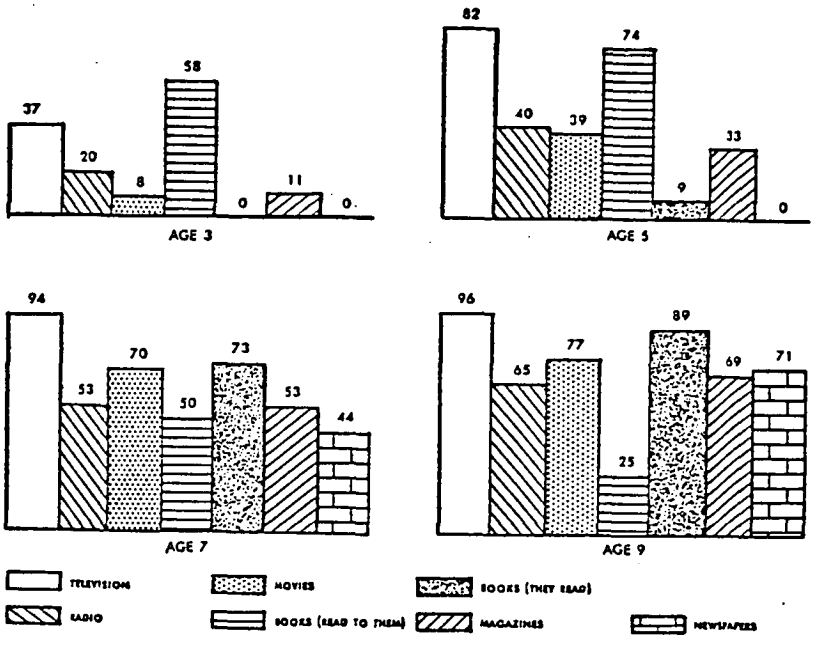


Figure 2.1: The beginnings of mass media use; percentage of children making regular use of each of the media at different ages.

(Source: Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) **Television in the Lives of our Children**, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, p. 28.)

According to this study (p. 27)

> *Throughout the preschool years, television time far exceeds other media time; in fact, it usually exceeds the total of other media time. Nine out of ten children are well acquainted with television (indeed, viewing it at least two hours a day) before they read their first newspaper copy. Eight out of ten are well acquainted with television before they begin to sound out the words of any print whatsoever. Two-thirds of them are already television viewers before they have much experience with movies. Even at the end of ten years, when they are making some use of all media, television is the only one they are using day after day.*

The relevance of Schramm, Lyle and Parker's study is somewhat debatable however, since the study was conducted in the United States of America almost 30 years ago.

A study by Lyle and Hoffman (1972) indicated that three, four and five year old children use other media less than television. For example, in a study that looked at the media habits of 274 Grade 1 children in 15 American schools, the researchers found that while children were familiar with and watched television on a daily basis, half the children could not remember the last time they saw a movie at the cinema; less than half the children listened to the radio in the preceding day; 22% of the children listened to records on the previous day; and only 20% of children said they read books daily.

A more recent study by Williams (1986) found that in towns where multiple television stations existed (she referred to them as MULTITEL) children reported watching more television (33.6 hours per week) compared with towns where only one television station (UNITEL) existed and students reported watching 25.4 hours per week. Williams also noted that in the town where no television (NOTEL) could be received, students were heavier users of the library than children who lived in towns having television. Williams further indicated that girls read more books per month than boys, and as the students' age increased the number of books read per month declined. Six and seven year old children read approximately nine to ten books per month compared with eleven and twelve year old children who read six or seven books per month, and sixteen to eighteen year old adolescents who read four books per month. Williams acknowledged that the decrease in reading with age is probably associated with the nature of reading material available to different age groups. For example, the infant storybook generally has a short story accompanied by large page-by-page illustrations. It is generally read, either by the parent or the child, at one sitting - unlike books for older children, which have few if any illustrations and contain much longer text, making it difficult for a reader to complete the story at one sitting. Williams also found that heavy users of one print medium were also heavy users of other print media (i.e. heavy book readers were also heavy magazine or newspaper readers) and that radio listeners similarly used print media 'fairly heavily'. However, the amount of television viewing was negatively related to reading books and listening to the radio. No explanations were offered for the relationship of reading to radio use, however several explanations were proposed to account for the negative relationship between reading and television viewing. For example, von Feilitzen's 'functional equivalence' was discussed by Williams (1976), suggesting that television served the needs and functions of other media thus eliminating the need to use a variety of media sources to gain information.

With the exception of Williams' study, there is little recent evidence of children's comparative use of the media. There is however considerable research available regarding children's time spent with television. For example, Tindall, Reid and Goodwin (1977) indicated that the average lower primary Australian child watched television for approximately 18 hours per week. Holman (1980) indicated that Australian pre-school children watched about 10 hours of television per week. The Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (1978) reported that some overseas children watched more television than Australians. For example, Canadian children (2-6 years) watched approximately 20 hours of television per week compared with British children who watched approximately 19 hours per week, and American children watched 14-21 hours per week.

More recent information, obtained from a 1988 Nielsen Report, indicated that 2-5 year old American children watched 25 hours per week and 6-11 year old children watched more than 22 hours of television per week and adolescents 12-17 years watched 23 hours per week (Committee on Communications, 1990, p. 1119). In comparison Edgar (1983) and Hodge and Tripp (1986) report that the average viewing per week by an Australian child had increased to 23 hours per week, with 20% of children viewing 40 hours upwards per week. Edgar (1983, p. 2) also noted that :

> *pre-school children up to the age of 6 are the single heaviest television viewing audience in Australia. The average pre-school child may be watching 30 hours of television a week.*

Edgar goes on to illustrate graphically the pervasiveness of television:

> *Throughout their schooling, these same children will complete 11,500 hours of formal education. They will also view 15,000 hours of television. They will see 500,000 advertisements and for every hour they read they will view 7 hours of television.* (Ibid)

In terms of children's use of videos, Cupit's video survey provides some insight into the use and accessibility of videotaped material for 1,498 nine-to-twelve year old children in South Australia. Cupit (1986) reported that 60.9% of the sample had a video cassette recorder at home, and 85.7% of children reported that they had access to videotaped material at friends' homes. The study did not report the frequency of use of video cassettes, but illustrated children's ease of access to X, (adult audience only), R (restricted to adults 18 years and over) and M (recommended for mature audiences 15

years and over) classified videos, either in their own home or at friends' homes. Lelong (1989) similarly found that primary school children at a Tasmanian Catholic school had access to R and M classified videotapes.

It would seem that, apart from sleeping, television occupies more of a child's time than any other activity. According to the research, the degree to which children view television largely depends on a wide range of factors, including children's social status, self-esteem and intelligence. For example, Sharman (1975), Tindall, Reid and Goodwin (1977) and von Feilitzen, Filipson and Schyller (1980) found that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds view more television than their higher status counterparts; and that children of lower intelligence view more television than children of higher intelligence.

Findings such as this may be applicable to this study in that if children of different socio-economic backgrounds use and react differently to the media, then perhaps only some groups of children may need media education or alternatively, different media education content may be necessary for different groups of students.

The evidence so far indicates that television is more likely to be used by infant children than other entertainment media. But this evidence alone does not confirm that television is a greater influence on children than the cinema or any other media. It does suggest however that researchers have been more concerned about the effects of television, because they have devoted much more time to this area.

2. Children's understanding of media reality and fantasy

For the purposes of this study it is necessary to make the distinction between reality and representations of reality. The mass media present varying degrees of 'representations of reality'. For example information presented in a television news broadcast, regardless of whether it is a live or delayed report is a **representation** of what happened in reality. The event witnessed by the viewing audience is experienced indirectly - it may be realistic, by depicting what actually occurred, but the audience is perceiving a representation of the event - not the actual event. This is based on the philosophical doctrine of representationism. It is also consistent with the artist's view of representationism, implying that a representation is the act or instance of representing (i.e. a dramatic performance, verbal or pictorial print).

Infant children, like older children and adults, are fascinated by the media - particularly television. However, unlike older children and adults, infant children bring to their television viewing a lack of experience, skills and perceptions which may lead to a misunderstanding of mass media content.

This is in conflict with Postman's *'consummate egalitarian'* perception of television. In his book **The Disappearance of Childhood,** Postman (1985, p. 84) says:

> *Television, by contrast,* (to books) *is an open-admission technology to which there are no physical, economic, cognitive, or imaginative restraints. The six-year-old and the sixty-year-old are equally qualified to experience what television has to offer. Television in this sense, is the consummate egalitarian medium of communication, surpassing oral language itself. For in speaking, we may always whisper so that the children will not hear. Or we may use words they may not understand. But television cannot whisper, and its pictures are both concrete and self-explanatory. The children see everything it shows.*

But while it is true that today's children appear to be more informed and knowledgeable - perhaps as a result of television's pervasiveness - there is considerable evidence that children do not comprehend the content of television programs. According to Greenfield (1984), Cupit (1980), and Knowles and Nixon (1989), young children have poor comprehension and retention of television information, even when the televised material has been especially designed for children.

There is also evidence to suggest that many adults do not understand the fantasy nature of television characters and situations. It was reported (Education Department of South Australia, 1983, p. 3) that *The actor Robert Young, who portrayed Marcus Welby, MD used to receive 5,000 letters per week requesting medical advice.* Similarly, following an episode of **Coronation Street** in which a resident was evicted from her council flat, hundreds of irate viewers telephoned the London Council to complain about the woman's eviction. According to Toffler (1971, p. 145) viewers form

> *relationships with these vicarious people, just as we do with friends, neighbours and colleagues ... They take on a reality almost as (and sometimes even more) intense than that of many people with whom we do have 'in-person' relationships.*

In terms of emotional development and pre-school children, Cupit (1980, p. 11) says:

> *...the pre-schooler is increasingly fearful, jealous, volatile. In play, the child can distinguish between reality and fantasy, but in terms of*

> *television images, the child cannot so readily construct what is fantasy and what is reality. This uncertainty makes the pre-schooler vulnerable...*

Greenfield (1984, pp. 48-49) similarly supports this view. Furthermore, she suggests that if children identify with television characters, they are more likely to consider the program real. She argues that television's live imagery is more seductive in transforming fantasy into reality than books are. She continues:

> *Since children tend to identify with the fantastic characters on television (such as Superman) and to recognize the realistic ones, powerful factors operate to get the child to treat the televised world as real. This belief in the reality of the televised world makes children of all age groups vulnerable to the social messages of television .*

On most occasions the mass media show representations of reality and fantasy from an adult perspective, symbolized by abstract language and meanings that are not compatible with a child's 'reasoning' or intellectual skills. In order to give some meaning to what is viewed, the child 'centres' or concentrates on fragmented messages to which he can relate the real world and his real world experiences. For example, a violent murder on television might raise no reaction at all from a two year old child who has little or no experience of pain or death. If the scene was accompanied by loud noises or gestures that were frightening to the child, then the child's fear reaction is likely to be as a result of the loud noises or gestures, rather than the act of murder. The seven to eight year old child on the other hand, begins to develop moral values and attitudes through contact with the social world, as well as having gained some experience of fear (through stories, imagination and real world experiences). He may be frightened by the same act of murder on television because he has learned that (a) that type of behaviour is unacceptable; (b) that hurting is frightening; and/ or (c) he may empathise with a victim. It should be stressed however, that because of differences in cognitive and emotional development, personality, environmental background etc., not all infant children will react in the same manner, at the same time, to the same stimuli.

For example, Mellet (1985, p. 9) points out that very young children, emotionally disturbed children and those who cannot differentiate between reality and fantasy may react in a 'painful' or 'unacceptable' manner following exposure to violent media material. But she says that *on the whole the well adjusted child does not seem to suffer too badly if he/she can distinguish between fantasy and reality and if the program is obviously fantasy.* Although this view has some support, more recently there has been growing concern regarding the short and long term emotional effects that children may

experience as a result of exposure to violent television (Garner, 1986; and Lewis, 1988). Discussing the vulnerability of infant children to the messages of television, Greenfield (1984, pp. 48-49) says that very young children equate all of television with reality, with the exception of cartoons. She says:

> *As children get older they adopt new definitions of television reality: first they believe that anything on television that could happen in the real world is real on television; later they believe that what they see on television represents something that probably happens in the real world.*

Dorr (in Bryant and Anderson, 1983) and her colleagues found that young children (kindergarten to third grade) used genre cues to determine which television content was pretend. Content that looked fantastic - cartoons, witches and ghosts was perceived to be pretend; content that was non-humorous and looked realistic - the news, crime dramas, etc. was thought to be real. Dorr found that children of all ages evaluate the *characters, what they do, what happens to them, what their surroundings are and so on* when making reality/fantasy decisions.

According to Dorr, children's perceptions of television's reality, are likely to be influenced by their understanding of the *mechanics of television production* or the *economic structure of the television industry.* In other words, if children have a knowledge of how television programs are created, or understand how television uses advertisements to sell programs and stories, then they can use that information as a basis for judging the reality of programs. This concept implies that some form of media education is necessary before children are able to make such judgements.

Dorr points out that children need to be able to distinguish between information that is real and fantasy. She acknowledges that television for children is the most similar mediated experience to real life and that is probably why children accept it as reality. Dorr says that eight year old children come to believe that television programs are 'made-up'. However she says that this was not linked to any form of education in the school.

These findings support the researcher's belief that media education - if it is to be included in the curriculum at all - may need to be implemented prior to primary school if it is to be of any benefit to the children. In fact, if media education was implemented in infant school perhaps there would be no need for it to be continued throughout primary school.

There is evidence to suggest that some infant children are confused by media messages. Television and cinema in particular have the potential to make fantasy look like reality. Through special effects photography, stunt work and editing processes, television material can be manipulated until it looks like a real event. Young children who do not have the ability to understand the complexities of television production are vulnerable to the messages that appear on the screen. They believe what they see. Media education may be an answer to this problem. Dorr has suggested that young children use genre cues to help them decide which content is real or pretend. If this is the case, then these cues could also be used as a basis for evaluating children's understanding of the media. For example, by providing children with visual images of witches, monsters, newsreaders, actors from popular programs etc, it may be possible to evaluate children's perceptions of reality and fantasy. This information would be valuable in that it would clearly indicate if children in the sample were confused by the media; what images confused them and this information could subsequently be used as a basis for media activities. In this case the education would be based on the needs of children at varying ages. Therefore the research problem arising from the literature in this section translates to: Do Australian children discriminate between the media's representation of fantasy and reality? And do children use or treat the information differently when they are aware that it is fantasy? In other words do they still imitate animated information, and are they frightened by animated information knowing that it is not real? If the answer to this question is yes, then media education would need to focus on issues such as this. And finally, can children's understanding of fantasy and reality be hastened through media education?

The next section outlines the way in which children imitate the media. To a large degree, children's imitative use of the mass media reflects their ability or inability to understand media messages. Children learn to make sense of the world through formal instruction, positive and negative reinforcement, experimentation, observation, identification and imitation of models (including media models). In the early years of childhood development, observation and imitation of the behaviour of others forms a significant part of the learning process. The nature of television as a potential source of imitation has been of considerable interest to researchers ever since its advent. This is largely because of the vast quantity of antisocial behaviour contained in television programs and the potential harm to young children should they imitate such behaviour.

3. Children's imitative use of the media

Jesus Christ, Superstar,
Bumming 'round the corner on a Yamaha,
Saw a cop, had to stop,
Hit him on the head with a lolly pop.

This parody, indiscriminately chanted by infant children at a Tasmanian private girls school, is an example of children's verbal folklore. The acquisition of this and similar rhymes and chants exemplifies the powerful nature of imitative learning. Even before children reach the age of one, they are able to imitate sounds and actions. At approximately eight to ten months of age, after repeated adult demonstrations, infant children are able to wave a hand signifying a farewell gesture. Similarly, they learn the conventions of language, rituals, customs and sex role-behaviour through the imitation of significant others. Davidson and Yu (1974, p. 4) outline the socialization process by saying:

> *Each person is the product of all the contacts ever experienced with other people, directly or indirectly. Our voices, gestures, and nervous systems reflect and refract the stimuli to which we have been exposed.*

For infant children, as well as older children, screened information provides them with additional role models and experiences. During this period children are involved deeply in mass media fantasy stories and at the same time they are coming to terms with their real world. There is however, a stark contrast between the world of **The Labyrinth, Superman, Cinderella, Dr. Who** and the real world in which children live. Yet there is evidence to suggest that young children often confuse elements of the imaginary world with that of the real world. In July 1975, a Hong Kong radio news bulletin reported that two six year old boys, dressed in 'Superman' attire, plunged to their death after they jumped from a high rise apartment, believing that they could fly like their superhero.

Besides developing physically, infant children are developing social relationships at school, learning about independence in the world, building a repertoire of emotional responses and acquiring a set of moral standards, values and attitudes, which will form the basis of their social and emotional development. At this critical stage of development, young children, so eager to learn, imitate many role models. Almost everything they do is learned, either intentionally or inadvertently through the imitation

of others - whether it is singing a rhyme, playing a game, learning to skip or writing their name. That makes television a potentially powerful educator, particularly when researchers tell us that infant children are amongst the heaviest television consumers and when researchers (McCann and Sheehan, 1985) tell us that 51.3% of television programs in Australia contain violent material.

A considerable amount of the research into the mass media's effects on children has centred on the cause-effect relationship between the aggression of a television model and subsequent imitative behaviour of children. The expressed concern stems from the assumption that children imitate the antisocial behaviour of a television model, resulting in injury or death to self or others. Lovaas (1961), Friedrich and Stein (1978), Liebert, Davidson and Neale (1977) and Eron (1982) found that there was a cause-effect relationship between aggression or violence on television and subsequent behaviour of children. For instance, in the study conducted by Lovaas (1961) children who viewed an aggressive cartoon exhibited significantly more aggressive behaviour with toys than children who viewed a non-aggressive one.

In two large scale longitudinal studies, Eron (1982) looked at the relationship between television violence and aggression in the United States of America, Finland, Poland and Australia. He said that viewing television violence is a cause of aggressive behaviour in children. He also found that: (a) children around age eight may be susceptible to the effect of violent television; (b) identification with an aggressive television character is likely to be related to aggression; (c) academic achievement is negatively related to aggression; and (d) rejection and physical punishment by parents are factors that increase aggression in children. According to Eron, observation of television violence and aggressive behaviour was not simply a uni-directional process. He said:

> *Although we have demonstrated that television violence is one cause of aggressive behaviour, it is also probable that aggressive children prefer to watch more and more violent television. The process is very likely circular.* (p. 210).

Eron's study was unique in that it not only looked at children over a long period of time, but it also looked at a media intervention program that aimed to help children discriminate between television fantasy and real life events with the long-term goal of reducing children's aggressive behaviour. The outcome of Eron's media education initiative is important to this study and is discussed further in the next chapter.

Sheehan (1983) conducted a similar longitudinal study over three successive years (1979-1981) with 106 children in Grades 1, 2 and 3. His Australian study was part of Eron's larger cross cultural investigation into television viewing and its effects on children. Sheehan found that boys and girls differed in their television viewing; boys preferred more violent programs than girls, boys were judged as more aggressive by their classmates than girls, etc. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between television viewing and the level of aggression of some groups. For example:

> *Overall violence viewing was significantly related to aggressive behaviour for all children in each of Grades 3, 4 and 5, the strongest association in the study being observed for boys in Grade 4. It was at Grade 4 that the aggression level of the children peaked; overall violence viewing peaked also at Grade 4; television viewing was most intense at this level (again especially for boys); and it was at Grade 4 level that daydreaming commenced its decline for boys as compared with girls (whose aggressive fantasies at this stage began to increase).* (1982, p. 425-426).

Sheehan said that the peaking of the effect for boys in Grade 4 suggests that the social and cognitive stage might be important as far as the influence of television viewing is concerned. In concluding, Sheehan indicated that outright censorship was too harsh, and instead favoured responsiveness to advice about programming.

Duhs and Gunton (1988) takes issue with the study by Sheehan (1983) and others such as Eron (1982) suggesting that since there is no scientific evidence to prove the connection between childhood aggression and the viewing of violence on television, then no particular action or policy advice (such as that suggested by Sheehan in the above paragraph) is sustainable. The authors suggest that rather than cutback the amount of violence on television, it might be better to present the violence *in various packages so as to heighten awareness - even amongst children - of the different ethical principles involved in situations presaged by, or likely to lead to, violence* (Duhs and Gunton, 1988, p. 193) - presumably so that children can make up their own minds about the value of violence. It could be argued that many television programs already show examples of moral and ethical situations involving violence - as well as other controversial issues (e.g. **G.P., A Country Practice, Degrassi Junior High, Ramona**, etc.). The problem with the approach put forward by Duhs and Gunton is that it assumes that (a) children will be permitted to view such programs; (b) children can understand such programs; (c) children can make appropriate decisions about the morality and value of violence in society; and (d) children can be 'educated' by such programs. In relation to the last point Duhs and Gunton say that *It is not apparent that TV is a medium which is useless in teaching such distinctions* (p. 193). This is a

somewhat unusual statement in the light of what the authors have said about television research as it could be argued that the issue of *television viewing and learning* is yet to be resolved.

In an attempt to determine whether children would imitate a television model's behaviour, Bandura, Ross and Ross (1963) measured children's aggressive play after exposing them to an aggressive film. The children were divided into three groups, each of which was shown an identical television program containing a male model who demonstrated physical and verbal aggression towards a plastic 'bobo' doll. Each group was then exposed to either (i) *a model punished scene*, (ii) *a model rewarded scene*, or (iii) *no additional scene*, before being placed in a similar environment; this provided the children with an opportunity to imitate the aggressive film model, if they desired. Children who viewed the initial scenes followed by an additional scene in which they saw the *male model rewarded* with sweets and soft drinks for his aggressive actions, imitated the model's aggressive actions. The group of children who viewed the initial scenes followed by an additional scene in which the *model was reprimanded* for his aggressive actions, did not imitate the male model's aggressive actions, although when asked to remember the aggressive model's actions, the children were able to do so. The third group of children, who viewed the initial scenes only, imitated the male model's aggressive behaviour. The results indicated that children can and will imitate a film model's antisocial behaviour and that the response can be motivated.

Later studies by Bandura, Ross and Ross using the 'bobo' doll and a cartoon characterisation of an aggressive model, similarly indicated that children would imitate an aggressive fantasy model. Bandura and his colleagues' work was based on the notion that children learn through observation and imitation of social models and even though their work has been strongly criticised on methodological grounds, there appears to be little dispute that children can and do imitate a television model's behaviour.

Critics of laboratory studies such as these (see Sheehan (1987), and Hartnagel, Teevan and McIntyre (1975)) have pointed out that the laboratory settings in which most of the experiments took place were artificial and unlikely to represent the real situation. The difficulty in observing children in their natural environment is that it is extremely time consuming and expensive. An alternative might be to directly ask children about whether they imitate the media, and/or perhaps ask other people who constantly have contact with children - e.g. parents and teachers.

Even though many laboratory studies have investigated children's imitative or modelling behaviour in an attempt to prove or disprove the relationship between television aggression and real-life aggression, none more clearly illustrate that link than examples taken from the real world. Tindall, Reid and Goodwin (1977) give examples such as a Sydney youth who hanged himself following a television demonstration of a hanging. Similarly they report a sex rampage in Sydney by a youth who was inspired by scenes in **Policewoman**. Similarly disturbing is a report in which Phillips (1986) highlights the relationship between suicides on television and suicides in the real world. Using precise dates on the media coverage of suicides he found that increased publicity given to a suicide story also increased the suicide rates in the area. Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) similarly provide anecdotal reports of young children imitating potentially harmful behaviour that was previously shown on television.

More recently the **Sunday Tasmanian** (8 July, 1990, p. 13) reported a story about the negative effects of a cartoon - **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** - on some Tasmanian infant children. The full-page article said that infant children were role playing scenes from the cartoon and as a result of the television-induced games, violence in the playground had reached *scary proportions*. One teacher said: *Because it is role play the children are not in control of their own actions - they don't consider the consequences*. The report further added that psychologists have warned of the dangers of permitting children to watch **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**, saying that the film - the live action movie released on American movie screens in March 1990 - was *psychologically harmful to children*. The National Coalition of Television Violence has listed 194 acts of violence involving Ninja Turtles, according to the newspaper article. It must be pointed out however, that newspapers are prone to exaggeration and are not always a reliable source of information. What can be extracted from this information is that teachers in the community were concerned about children's imitation of television characters - so much so that they contacted the local newspaper. Articles such as this also play a large part in keeping issues associated with media effects in the public mind.

While there are researchers who believe that the negative effects of the media do influence the audience, many writers have pointed out that other factors are likely to have had an effect as well. For example, poet and critic Enright (1988, p. 37) says:

> *...While 'copy-cat' crimes are a current feature of the scene, no-one can prove a connection between this sort of entertainment and the comparable happenings in our streets.*

He does point out however, that *we are influenceable creatures*. Yuri Gabriel, (1973, p. 127) a former television cameraman and editor, points out that *television is an attitude reinforcer* and when the influence of television is compared with that of parents, teachers etc, it can only have a negative effect on the already disturbed child.

Filmed material may have a variety of effects on the behaviour of some members of society. According to Bryan and Schwartz (1971, p. 57), *It seems quite clear that models as presented in films are capable of evoking a wide range of response, from motor actions to verbalized preferences, from aggression to courage and self-sacrifice.* A great deal of research has centred on the negative effects of television programs on children. In particular, researchers have emphasised the detrimental social learning or imitative effects that may result from exposure to television violence and aggression. However, not all effects have been found to be negative. For example, Rushton and Owen (1974) studied immediate and delayed effects of television modelling and found that children's exposure to a television model's generous behaviour had an immediate effect on the children's generosity, although this tended to dissipate over a two week period. However, a 'real life' situation testing the same hypothesis resulted in a more durable and overall stronger effect than the television model. Friedrich and Stein (1978) found that prosocial interpersonal behaviour increased as a result of viewing prosocial television programs - but only for children from the lower socio-economic backgrounds.

In the literature search, there was little interest in comparative studies about children's imitation of the entertainment media generally. Research has focused on television and in particular violence on television and subsequent aggressive behaviour in children. In looking at media education however, this researcher believes that it is necessary to find out about children's general imitative behaviour of a vareity of entertainment media. We can not assume that children are not affected by other media; nor can we assume that they are only likely to imitate the violent behaviour of the audio visual media. Perhaps children imitate other media just as much. It might be possible to extend the research in this area by examining what behaviour children imitate (positive and negative) in each of the entertainment media.

In summary, there is still considerable disagreement regarding the effects of televised violence or aggression on children. Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961), Elmendorf (1976), Waters (1977) and Canavan (1978) have suggested that some children will be more affected by what they see on television than others. One reason for this may be the amount of parental guidance given to children. Other reasons will be related to the

viewers ability to distinguish fact from fantasy; the values, beliefs and moral standards of the children; the viewers desire and opportunity to imitate media models etc. The following section examines literature in relation to children's emotional responses to media content.

4. Children's fear reactions to the media

Agras (1985, p. 2) makes the distinction between common fears and phobias. Common fears are those emotions that are not disabling or overly debilitating, even though they may cause intense momentary anxiety. Commonly shared fears such as the fear of snakes, spiders or dogs are examples of common fears. An encounter with the above fear stimuli might cause anxiety and avoidance behaviour in most people, whereas the phobic experiences an extreme anxiety and panic reactions resulting in compulsive avoidance behaviour.

Watson and Lindgren (1959, pp. 154-5) discuss fear as a negative emotion saying that fear or anxiety responses have an 'away from' quality to them - that is we want to remove ourselves from offending objects or persons or want them to depart from us. Similarly, Agras (1985, p. 63) says fear is an early warning system that helps the individual to avoid potentially dangerous situations. He notes that physical pain (e.g. a hand on a hot stove) creates a reflexive withdrawal of the affected part of the body, but fear of a threatening situation leads to withdrawal of the whole organism. This protectionist theory of fear implies that individuals already have a repertoire of previously learned fear experiences from which they can evaluate each new situation in terms of their emotional coping ability, or that fear is an innate mechanism. Evidence suggests that the fear response is both innate and learned and the manifestation and expression of fears is dependent upon emotional and cognitive maturation of the individual (Jersild and Holmes, 1935; Marks, 1969; Agras 1985).

Figure 2.2 below illustrates the fear response as proposed by Agras (1985, p. 62). According to the Agras proposal, the fear stimulus is perceived as threatening. The perception, based on previous experience, activates physiological mechanisms which lead to the individual's avoidance or coping strategy.

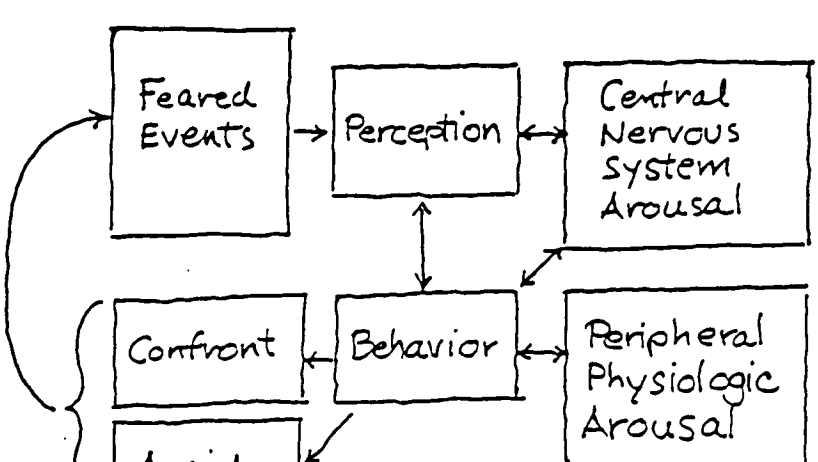


Figure 2.2: The fear response as proposed by Agras.

(Source: Agras, S. (1985) Panic: Facing Fears, Phobias and Anxiety, New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, p. 62).

Although Agras briefly discusses the physiological and electrochemical changes that occur, the model fails to highlight the complexity of the psychological and physiological relationships. Agras similarly neglects the varying levels of distress and the complex protective strategies (e.g. mothering, self talk, rationalizing), reappraisal, extinction and delayed activation of fears. Given the limitations of the Agras model and the absence of a suitable interpretation of the fear response, another model was formulated and is presented in Chapter 4.

Media induced fears

In 1896, Australia's first movie theatre - *Salon Lumiere* - was opened. It was also the year that audiences witnessed Lumiere's impressive film footage of a speeding train hurtling towards them - apparently out of the cinema screen (Griffith, Mayer, and Bowser, 1957; and Cheshire, 1979). On October 30, 1938 the radio play **War of the Worlds** sent a wave of panic over a huge American audience who thought the world was about to end. In Orson Welles' biography, Higham (1985, p. 126) writes:

> *In Birmingham, Alabama, people rushed into the streets en masse; at one college the women in the sorority houses, weeping and trembling over the broadcast, lined up at the telephones to speak to their parents or other loved ones for the last time. The streets leading from almost every city in New England were filled with refugee cars. Parties stopped dead as the hysteria spread. No one seems to have listened to the end of the*

broadcast, when Welles explained that a dramatic presentation was all it was.

A study conducted by social scientists following the broadcast, revealed some graphic anecdotal reports of listeners' reactions to the broadcast. According to Cantril (1940) an estimated one million Americans became frightened and thousands were panic stricken. The report stated:

> *Mrs. Delaney, an ardent Catholic living in a New York suburb, could not pull herself from her radio. 'I never hugged my radio so closely as I did last night. I held a crucifix in my hand and prayed while looking out of my open window for falling meteors. I also wanted to get a faint whiff of the gas so that I would know when to close my window or hermetically seal my room with waterproof cement or anything else I could get hold of. My plan was to stay in the room and hope that I would not suffocate before the gas blew away. When the monsters were wading across the Hudson River and coming into New York, I wanted to run up on my roof to see what they looked like, but I could not leave my radio while it was telling me of their whereabouts'.*

Similarly another account read:

> *Helen Anthony, a young high school girl in Pennsylvania, wrote that she kept on saying, 'Where are we going to go? What can we do? What difference does it make whether we get killed now or later?' I was really hysterical. My two girl friends and I were crying and holding each other and everything seemed so unimportant in face of death. We felt it was terrible we should die so young. I'm always nervous anyway and I guess I was getting everybody even more scared. The boy from downstairs threatened to knock me out if I didn't stop acting so hysterical. We tried another small station which had some program on it that confirmed our fears. I was sure the end of the world was coming'.* (Cantril, 1940, p. 50).

According to the study, the listeners' confusion was based on several logical explanations. Firstly, radio was an accepted vehicle for broadcasting important news items. The listeners had faith in radio broadcasting. Secondly, the radio play referred to real places in America. Street names, cities and locations were identifiable. Thirdly, the radio play conducted and discussed interviews with prominent authority figures such as professors from the university, police officers and heads of government. To the radio audience, these discussions appeared credible and genuine.

These examples of mass hysteria were created as a result of the mass media's ability to present fictitious material in a convincingly realistic manner. Mass hysteria, particularly that created by the mass media, is a rare sociological phenomenon and

although it is difficult to predict whether such an event will occur again, lessons from history indicate that the media's ability to incite mass fear remains.

In November 1984, public reaction following transmission of the American television movie **The Day After** on the ABC revealed much less emotional impact on viewers. Chavez, Hamilton and Keilin (1986) investigated 126 second-to-sixth grade children's rank-ordered fears the day following the screening of **The Day After** and again seven months later. Results indicated that younger children were less likely to report war as one of their top five fears either immediately following **The Day After** or seven months later. For example, none of the second grade children reported fear of war as one of their top five fears, compared with the 75% of sixth grade children who rated war as one of their top five fears following the screening of **The Day After**. The follow-up survey seven months later revealed that 2.5% of second grade children - compared with 50% of sixth grade children - rated war as one of their top five fears.

The researchers proposed that differences in children's fear of war might be attributed to developmental differences. Older children and pre-teenagers understand aspects of danger and death and are therefore more likely to be fearful of war than younger children (Chavez et. al. 1986).

Numerous studies have been conducted examining individual children's television-induced fears (Ekman et al., 1972; Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin, 1978; Cohen and Adoni, 1980; Cantor and Sparks, 1984; Wilson and Cantor, 1985; Sparks, 1986 and Cantor, Wilson and Hoffner, 1986). These researchers have been particularly interested in the type of image that induces fear in the viewer, and strategies used to reduce or cope with media-induced fear.

Based on an early study investigating the psychological effects of western films on sub-adolescent boys by Emery and Martin in 1957, Thomson (in Australian Broadcasting Control Board, 1972) investigated the effects of television crime dramas and tension films on 233 ten-to-eighteen year old students. Using ultra-violet and infra-red audience photograph data, Thomson recorded subjects' reactions to specific scenes in crime, tension or control films. In addition to collecting data regarding facial expressions, film comprehension and recall were also assessed. In summary, the results indicated that violent scenes did not arouse much excitement in sub-adolescent and early adolescent viewers. Scenes depicting death or imminent disaster sometimes aroused anxiety in viewers, in particular female viewers. 'Crime-thriller' type films

aroused more anxiety than 'crime-detection' type films. Violent action did not appear to add to or detract from the viewer's enjoyment of the film. In terms of effects on older children (13 to 18 year old) Thomson (1972, p. 107) noted:

> *Crime or control films at a high level of tension appeared to have more strongly marked effects on most of the adolescent sample, whatever the viewer's degree of frequention or insight in regard to crime and tension films, than did crime or control films pitched at a lower level of tension.*

Thomson also reported that students maintained a high degree of attention throughout the films and that girls (according to photographic evidence) reacted *more intensely to potentially alarming episodes at the moment of impact.* (Ibid).

Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin (1978) similarly investigated the facial expressions of children while watching televised violence. In their study, 20 five and six year old Finnish children were exposed to five edited, black and white, English dialogue films, each approximately five minutes in length. The edited scenes, consisting of 19 violent and 6 non-violent scenes were classified as either (a) non-violent, (b) cartoon violence, (c) physical violence or (d) verbal aggression. Children viewed the films in pairs, in a laboratory setting, while facial and upper body movements were recorded unbeknown to the children with a video camera. The duration of the experimental situation was approximately one hour which included a ten minute rest period. At the conclusion of each film, children were asked to indicate the best or worst aspects of the film, their fear reactions to the film and preferences for characters in the film. Following the experiment five judges evaluated the children's facial expressions and rated the expressive behaviour on a five-point rating scale. The results indicated that *facial expressions of the children as reactions to the non-violent control film did not on any variable differ significantly from the reactions to the violent material.* (Lagerspetz, et al. 1978, p. 219). Scenes that aroused the most fear were those that showed physical violence together with the reactions of the victim. Verbal aggression resulted in audience withdrawal and lack of concentration. The researchers perceived children's withdrawal and concentration behaviour to be the result of fear rather than the the children's inability to understand the film contents (film dialogue was in English).

There were significant differences in involvement with the film and emotional expressivity associated with social class, gender and type of day care. For example, boys tended to express more worry, anger, concentration and tenseness than girls. The

researchers indicated that this may have occurred because there were more male characters for boys to identify with. Similarly, children who were long term day-care participants showed more joy, anger, concentration and activity than children who were not regular day-care participants (i.e. home nursed children) especially while viewing scenes of physical violence. According to the researchers, the experimental setting may have inhibited the home-nursed children, and the violent film stimuli might not have been sufficiently violent, resulting in non-significant differences between reactions to violent and non-violent scenes.

Can it be expected then, that young Australian girls will react more intensely than boys to potentially alarming visual material? Also, could there be socio-economic differences in children's reactions to media contents? These are two questions that this research seeks to answer because if the answers to the above questions are 'yes' then it might mean that media education needs to be tailored to meet the needs of specific groups.

More recently, numerous studies have reported investigations into the media's ability to induce fear in young children. For example, Cantor and Sparks (1984) reported that pre-school children and older elementary school children differ in their cognitive and affective reactions to the mass media. From data obtained in a parent survey (Cantor and Sparks, 1984) and interviews with children (Sparks 1986) the researchers found that five-to-seven year old children were frightened by the appearance of certain television characters. The researchers termed such television content 'impossible content', indicating that such characters could not possibly exist in the real world. Examples of these characters included grotesque or ugly characters and transformational characters such as 'The Incredible Hulk'. In comparison, eight-to-eleven year old children reported fear of events that could happen in real life; they included such things as physical violence, accidents etc. The researchers termed these events 'possible events'. In the 1984 study, Cantor and Sparks distributed 1,348 questionnaires, of which 439 (33%) were returned. Parents were asked two open-ended questions regarding the media presentations they perceived to cause fear in their children. The first question asked: *Which television shows, movies, books, comics etc. have caused the most fear, upset, sleep disturbances, worried questions in your child? (List as many as you can remember)* (Op. cit. p. 95). Question two asked parents to *state the specific characters, scenes, events etc., or the types of characters, scenes and events that have caused these reactions in your child* (p. 99). The results indicated that television shows or films were the most frequently mentioned source of fear-evoking mass media stimuli for children, according to parents. **The Incredible**

Hulk and **The Wizard of Oz** were frequently mentioned by parents of younger children as evoking fear in their child. As predicted, young children were reported to be more frightened of fantasy elements on television and film (e.g. witch, monster, transformational character) and less frightened of fiction or reality elements (e.g. stories representing real life characters or the news). Also as predicted, the eight-to-eleven year old children were reported to be less frightened by fantasy elements of a film or television program and more likely to be frightened by fictional or reality stories depicting events that could actually occur in the real world. The researchers concluded that young children may be less frightened of the more realistic television programs and films because *they fail to appreciate dangers that are not graphically portrayed* (p. 96).

An alternative explanation might be that young children fail to respond emotionally to potentially fear evoking stimuli because of their limited real-life experiences of pain, fear, and suffering. For example, it was reported that a three year old Los Angeles boy calmly telephoned for emergency help to report that his mother was choking (the **Mercury,** 13 October, 1989). The child's ability to remain calm and emotionally detached from the stressful situation may be the result of his inexperience with pain or suffering, and thus his lack of understanding of the feelings of others, or empathy.

A later study by Wilson and Cantor (1985) confirmed that there are developmental differences in 'empathy'. In an experiment to determine whether children at different ages were dissimilar in their tendency to share the emotion of a television character, 175 Wisconsin children (3-5 years and 9-11 years) were individually shown a video tape of a 'fear-provoking stimulus' (a segment from the movie **The Swarm** depicting a large honey bee coming toward the viewer in a menacing way); or a 'character's fear' segment (showing a close up shot of the frightened boy, sweating and squirming) embedded within a series of short non-arousing filler programs. Arousal measures were taken using electromyogram and skin temperature physiological equipment unobtrusively attached to the subject's left arm. As well as physiological measures, self-reports of emotional responses were recorded immediately following the viewing of the experimental segment. Results indicated that :

> *the younger children reported a higher proportion of negative reactions in the fear-provoking stimulus condition (33%) than in the character's fear condition (7%), whereas the proportions of negative reactions for the older children were very similar in the two conditions (fear-provoking stimulus 67%; character's fear 70%)* (Wilson & Cantor, 1985, p. 289).

The findings suggest that, when compared with the older experimental group, younger children are less emotionally aroused by fear portrayed by a television character than by a fear-provoking stimulus.

Accumulated evidence suggests, as one would suspect, that there are developmental differences in children's fear reactions to television and film content. Several researchers have attempted to link children's inability to understand television material to Piagetian theory (Cantor and Sparks, 1984; Wilson and Cantor, 1985; Alexander and Wartella, 1979), thus suggesting that children's emotional reactions to mass media content may be linked to stages of cognitive development. This theory, although supported, does not explain or account for the transitory shifts and discrepancies in children's media-induced fears. For example, some children never experience fear of a character's appearance, just as many children are not frightened by spiders or dogs while others have severe emotional reactions to such stimuli.

In seeking to investigate developmental differences in children's fear reactions to the mass media, Cantor and Sparks failed to question the children personally and instead used the responses of parents. This, they argued, avoided the inadequate language expression ability of young children. They admit, as do Knowles and Nixon (1989), that parental perceptions may not always correspond to the children's reported responses. A similar experiment, designed to confirm the earlier work of Cantor and Sparks, was conducted by Sparks in 1986, in which he overcame these methodological weaknesses by individually interviewing the children. Sparks' 1986 study confirmed the earlier developmental hypothesis and noted that there were a significant number of children who were exposed to frightening media and, by their own admissions, were suffering undesirable effects.

In response to children's media induced fears, researchers have investigated fear reduction techniques. Cantor and Wilson (1988) examined cognitive and non-cognitive coping strategies used by children (three-to-seven years and eight-to-eleven years) while they were using the media. Using various measurement techniques (children's self-report, videotaped facial expressions, physiological measures of heart rate and skin temperature and a behavioural approach-avoidance measure of fear), the investigators found that non-cognitive strategies - such as eating or drinking and holding a toy - were effective strategies for helping young children cope with fear reactions. Cognitive strategies, such as explanations stressing the unreality of the stimulus, were found to be effective with older children, but not effective for younger children. The implications of these findings are important for this research.

Greenfield has pointed out how television can also be used to reduce children's fears. In an experimental study of children who had a fear of undergoing surgery, children were divided into two groups. One group of children aged between four and twelve were shown a video of a child entering hospital and undergoing surgery. The other group were shown an unrelated film. The group who had viewed the surgery film were less fearful before and after surgery and had less post-operative problem behaviour. Greenfield points out that television is better than print in influencing emotional education because the *'realism of film makes it easier for the viewer ... to recognize what is happening* ...(p. 45) She also acknowledges that the reverse can also occur. That is television can make children more tolerant of violence.

Evidence suggesting harmful effects of media-induced fear

In respect to children's exposure to frightening stimuli, including television contents, it can be said that 'mild fear' is not harmful or threatening. However, there has been considerable concern, that intense emotional reactions (manifested by screaming or crying in a distressed manner as a result of exposure to a fear stimulus) may result in bad dreams, nightmares, and possibly more serious psychological damage (Ollendick 1979; Garner, 1988; Lewis 1988; and Sonnesson 1988).

A longitudinal study conducted in Sweden by Sonesson (1988) to measure and monitor children's (6-16 years) television viewing habits, revealed that *many six year olds were seeing adult programs that were often violent and totally unsuitable. One very negative effect was that many were frightened. They had nightmares which followed them for a very long time* (reported by Elsner in the **Mercury**, 9 November, 1988, p. 1). A South Australian survey conducted by Cupit (1986) similarly found that children (9-12 year old) had access to a wide range of videotapes, including M classified (Mature audience - not recommended for viewing by children under the age of 15 years) R classified (not recommended for persons between the age of 2 and 18 years) and some X classified video titles. In his report, Cupit found that of his 1,498 sample of 9-12 year old children, a total of 644 separate video titles were identified and classified as follows:

1% were X classification

16% were R classification
33% were M classification
26% were PG classification
23% were G classification

The study asked children whether scenes on the videotape left them with unwanted memories, to determine whether the videotapes left the children with any residual effects. The statement and question posed to children read:

> *And sometimes a part of a videotape is hard to forget, even when you would really like to forget it.*
>
> *Can you describe a part you have seen which was like that, and the name of the video that it came from?* (p. 6)

Children's responses revealed that unwanted memories stemmed particularly from violent (28.4%) and horror (8.5%) scenes. For example, children reported they would prefer to forget scenes such as:

> *When the man chopped the lady into little pieces. EVIL DEAD.*
>
> *When the boy got his head chopped off and it went down on the stage. PROM NIGHT.*
>
> *I can't forget the part where a man is laying on a bed and a long knife came through the bed and goes through the man's neck. I always look under my bed now. FRIDAY 13TH PART TWO.*
>
> *When they were walking on the road and the werewolf attacked one of them. And when he turned into a warewolf and he eats the policeman's head and it rolls down the stairs. And when his brother comes back to haunt him. AMERICAN WAREWOLF IN LONDON. (p. 74)*

Reports from parents confirmed that children were frightened by material in videotapes and that some children had been *nearly sick, jumpy, scared at night, crying, worried, scared of having a shower by himself with screen door closed* and suffering effects of bad dreams or nightmares (quoted from parental responses).

In response to the level of violence and aggression on news programs, Philip Garner, a clinical psychologist working with children at hospitals in Sydney, and over 100 of his colleagues, petitioned the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) to express concern over the emotional short and long term reactions of children to television (Garner, 1986, pp. 47-49). Garner castigates the television media for showing scenes of real-life violence. He says that

there is proof of harmful effects of screened violence on children and adults, and goes on to describe in great detail how children try to cope with intense emotional situations in response to what they have experienced on the television screen. According to Garner, children are unable to use defensive efforts to protect themselves from such images, unlike adults who are able to reduce the distress or anger in other ways e.g. talking about the events with others.

Garner's objective in writing to the ABC and ABT was to obtain 'public warnings' or announcements, alerting viewers prior to televising violent or disturbing scenes on television. However, warning people also serves to attract attention to an item. Garner also wanted disturbing news items displaced to news broadcasts later in the evening; and the total omission of violent material adjacent to children's programs. According to Garner, however, the response from the ABC and ABT was not favourable.

As a response to increasing public concern regarding the level of violence shown by the media, Senator Gareth Evans, former Minister for Communications, announced an ABT inquiry into television violence. On this occasion the inquiry panel asked for community responses and attitudes to violence on television rather than relying on empirically based research (Downes, 1988). Public hearings began in 1989 and issues such as television regulation, particularly regarding the later rescheduling of news programs, were major considerations. Rescheduling of news programs to a later time in the evening would prevent many children from being exposed to real-life violence such as Melbourne's Hoddle Street Massacre; the gruesome mutilation and cannibalism of a Melbourne derelict; the Ramstein aerobatics disaster; the Queen Street shooting and the Pennsylvania Treasurer Budd Dwyer's televised suicide (Downes, 1988, p. 6).

In addition, various others (Preston 1941; Singer, 1975; Graziano, De Giovanni and Garcia, 1979; Sarafino, 1986, Cantor and Wilson, 1988) have argued that media-induced fears could produce psychological ill-health. Singer (1975) pointed out that children may suffer frightening long-term night terrors as a result of being exposed to unsuitable television material, and Ollendick has argued that: *even mild to moderate fears cause psychological discomfort and may evolve into more persistent and excessive fear* (1979, p. 163).

Von Feilitzen (1976, p. 64) however, points out that:

> *Few children, however, seem to have suffered severe effects in the form of, for example, anxiety, nightmares or lost sleep from anything they have seen on television, and effects over any longer period of time are rare. When such influence has been noted, it has mostly been among younger children and children who also otherwise are sensitive or neurotic.*

From the behavioural and clinical perspective, little attention has been given to the prevention, or treatment of media-induced fear. Wilson, Hoffner and Cantor (1987) and Cantor and Wilson (1988) have researched fear reduction techniques to help children cope with frightening media presentations. Some of their fear reduction strategies however, rely on a co-viewer knowing and warning the viewer about potentially frightening scenes that are going to appear on the screen during the program, and of course this is not always possible.

The studies by Cantor and Sparks have raised some interesting points in relation to children's fear responses to television but fail to answer several important questions. For example, are children's media fears related to their understanding of reality and fantasy? In other words, are children who perceive television fantasy as reality, more likely to react fearfully to such images, than children who have a clear understanding of television fantasy? That is an important question in terms of children's need for media education about fantasy and reality. If, for example, children react fearfully to images that they know and understand to be pretend - then perhaps media education would need to concentrate on ways and means of reducing children's fears, rather than on educating them about television fantasy and reality.

Secondly, do children's fear responses vary in intensity according to the type of image presented in the media? To the researcher's knowledge no studies have examined children's levels of fear as a result of exposure to the media's potentially frightening or fear-evoking situations. This also is an important question because it could be argued that mild fear is probably not harmful to anyone, and secondly some people seem to enjoy being frightened a little. That being the case media education in relation to fear reduction may only apply to some groups of children e.g. those who are susceptible to intense fear reactions as a result of exposure to media images.

The studies as mentioned earlier will form a basis for the research conducted in this thesis. However, a more elaborate methodology is probably required to ensure the accuracy of the data. For example, Cantor and Sparks asked parents two open-ended questions about their children's reactions to the media - in this study it is envisaged that parents and children be asked about children's responses to media, and in addition to this children could be observed - not in the laboratory situation as was done by

Lagerspetz and colleagues, but in the children's home environment. This should provide a fairly complete picture of how children react to the media's frightening images.

Therefore this research needs to examine (a) children's fear of specific media images; and (b) children's intensity of fear to specific media images.

Overview of Chapter 2

Chapter 2 examined the amount of time children spend with various forms of media. Over the past few years children's television viewing times have increased slightly, with the average viewer spending 23 hours per week watching television. The literature reviewed also highlighted the problem of access to 'adult' videos by young children, and by their own admissions, the unwanted memories that some videos had left on them.

During early childhood, children spend a lot of time with fantasy stories presented by books, television, the cinema and other media sources. It is also during these early years of development that children are learning about the world. They experiment and imitate, and in their quest for learning, imitate numerous role models, including those from the media. The research into television's 'effects' on children's behaviour has been inconclusive, with some researchers suggesting that children imitate a television model's antisocial behaviour, and others saying that frightening events on television may have long-term effects on the emotional stability of children. Others say that most children will not be harmed by such events. Anecdotal evidence alone provides proof that some children are affected by what they see in the media. We already know that children are affected by television's contents; we now need to know about the way in which children use all the media to which they are exposed. With that information, it is hoped that - if necessary - it will be possible to develop curriculum materials to help infants understand how the media operates, highlighting the non-reality of media products.

Furthermore, the literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that there are developmental differences in children's fears associated with media images. There appears to be no such evidence available about Australian children, nor is there any evidence of children's levels of fear as a response to media's frightening material.

This study aims to build on previous research by

(a) determining children's understanding of television and video content based on the findings of Dorr, who has suggested that infant children use genre cues etc. to determine what is real and fantasy;

(b) providing up-to-date information regarding children's imitative use of the entertainment media;

(c) finding out whether specific images cause fear in children; whether children's intensity of fear differs according to different images; girls react more intensely than boys to media's frightening contents; whether there are socio-economic differences associated with fear responses;

The following chapter discusses media education intervention strategies, including techniques aimed at reducing children's media-induced fears.

Chapter 3

Literature Review: (ii) Media Education

There's only one thing that can kill the movies, and that's education
Will Rogers (American Humorist, 1879-1935)

Chapter 3 reviews the literature in relation to (i) the perceived need for media education; (ii) action taken by television authorities, parents and schools as a response to public criticism about media contents; and (iii) the current state of media education in infant/primary schools in Australia. It aims to show what has already been done to lessen the potential negative effects of the media on children.

In relation to media education in Australia, particularly that in secondary schools and tertiary institutions, the reader's attention is drawn to Geretschlaeger's 1982 unpublished research into mass media education in Australia, summarizing aspects of mass media education and media studies in tertiary institutions. Geretschlaeger's work, although providing limited information about infant and primary school media curricula because of the embryonic stage of media education in the Australian school system at the time, provides important and useful insights into media education in Australia prior to and during the early 1980s, and will therefore be used as a yardstick to measure the progress of media education within the various state education systems.

In relation to the literature reviewed in this chapter, several important characteristics should be remembered when interpreting the data in the present study:

(a) Chapter 3 examines the literature in relation to infant media education, particularly that which exists within the Australian education system. However, there exist within the literature numerous studies and mass media publications which refer to primary media studies courses (e.g. Doolittle, 1975; Singer, Singer and Zuckerman 1981; Abelman, 1982) that are also of relevance to this study, and therefore will be discussed. These studies are important in that they have implemented media education courses to young children under experimental conditions, and in this respect are similar to Part B of this research. But general textbooks about media education for secondary and tertiary students (e.g. Masterman, 1980; Masterman, 1985; Monahan, 1989; Murdoch, 1988; McMahon and Quin, 1987) will not be referred to in this study, because of their limited relevance to infant children. In this respect, the review of research in this chapter (and in Chapter 2) aims to impart the essence of current research on media education with young children, rather than conveying a broad perspective of the literature on mass media.

(b) As will become apparent in this chapter, the amount of research on media education with infant children in Australia is meagre and thus reference is made to proposed courses and overseas experimental research. It should be pointed out however, particularly because of different socio-cultural patterns and different media products in the various countries discussed in this study, that findings from the overseas studies may not necessarily reflect the Australian situation.

The first section focuses on conflicting interpretations of mass media education terminology, followed by a discussion of experimental media education strategies. The latter sections of this chapter examine the current state of media education in Australia. The literature reviewed in this chapter (and the previous chapter) is presented in relation to the development of a theoretical framework and methodology, which is reported in the following chapter.

This chapter is organized as follows:

3.1 Media Education: A problem of definition

Media education is **the deliberate act or process of acquiring awareness and knowledge about the media, its products, processes and audience effects through planned (and sequential) activities.** The term *media education* also implies other similar inter-related concepts, which are sometimes confused. For example, during the questionnaire evaluation stage teachers were asked if they had used media education with their class during the past year. Two teachers responded by saying that they had used a series of television programs called **Words and Pictures** (a language series) with their infant classes. The teachers had not taught the children **about** the media, they had in fact exposed them to a language lesson **via** the media. In this instance the term media education was used to describe **education by the media** rather than **education about the media**. Used in this way, education and media serve the same purpose. They both provide structured information that has been designed to influence the audience's cognitive, emotional or physical behaviour. Education **by** the media can be **formal** or **informal**. For example, formal education delivered by the mass media refers to planned 'school-type' sequenced material (Choat, 1982 and Chung, 1985), as opposed to informal education by the mass media which occurs as a result of unplanned vicarious exposure to the mass media (as discussed by Thompson, 1964; Postman, 1983).

Similarly, the term media education implies education in order to develop technical skills to **use** media equipment. For example, students wanting a career as a camera operator or film producer, might undertake a media education course at technical college or university to learn the technical skills involved with handling media equipment. In this instance the term media education implies education to develop technical skills to use the media.

The absence of a more appropriate subject title (e.g. media awareness activities; communication studies) or a precise definition of *media education*, *mass media education*, or *mass media studies* has led to vague and misleading interpretations of the terms which conflict with the way such terms are used by educators and academics working in the field of media curriculum development. The different connotations that have evolved are possibly due to the 'newness' of the field of media education, as well as the imprecise, vague or non-existent definitions accompanying media education research studies and literature. For example, few media education/studies documents actually define the concept of media education or media studies and those that attempt a definition often propose a broad definition followed by further definitions of media products. As an illustration, the Australian Capital Territory **Media Studies Curriculum Framework** working document (1989, p. 2) defined media studies as *a relevant, challenging study of the mass communication media* followed by a description of course content.

The New South Wales Draft Mass Media Studies K- Year 6 Curriculum statement (1988) defines mass media studies as *the study of mass media products, technologies and industries* followed by further definitions and descriptions of course contents, such as:

> *A media product is anything which is presented to an audience via communications technology. Examples of these media products are: news programs, serials, soap operas, advertisements, romance novels, records, computer software, photography, sports broadcasts...*
>
> *...In mass media studies a student will learn to recognise that all information presented in the mass media is part of a construction. It has been subject to a varied and exciting process of selection, editing, recreation and development.*

For the purposes of this research the term *media education*, as opposed to *media studies*, or *mass media education* is used. This term has been chosen because it is the most widely used and accepted terminology for describing education about the media.

SYNTHESIS

The term *media education*, being the most commonly used term to describe the body of knowledge that pertains to education about the media, implies that education is imparted to the student, and therefore any attempt to define mass media education must involve some sort of definition of (a) the media; and (b) education. In media education literature, the term media education has been ignored or vaguely interpreted. This research acknowledged the need for a precise definition of media education and a working definition was formulated.

3.2 The Perceived Need for Media Education: A plea for intervention

Public concern and the findings of a substantial body of research evidence have resulted in a plea for some form of intervention strategy. The concluding paragraphs of almost all the research usually calls for one or all of the following strategies: (a) the reduction of the level of aggression and violence on television (Skonia, 1977; Garner, 1986); (b) greater parental responsibility and intervention at home (Waters, 1977; Greenfield, 1984; Patterson, 1981; Holman and Braithwaite, 1982; Murray and Lonnborg, 1986; Committee on Communications, 1990); and (c) the introduction of media education courses in schools to educate children about the media (Masterman, 1980; Patterson, 1981; Singer, Zuckerman and Singer, 1981; Committee on Commuications, 1990). Each of these proposals will be discussed.

(a) The reduction in the level of violence and aggression in the media

Elmendorf (1976, p. 764), discussing violence on American television said:

> *The medical associations that I represent and I are deeply concerned about the effects of television on the youth of today... By the time a child is 18 years old, he has spent more hours in front of the television set than he has in school. Over TV he will have witnessed by that time some 18,000 murders and countless highly detailed incidents of robbery, arson, bombing, shooting, beatings, forgery, smuggling and torture - averaging approximately one per minute in the standard television cartoon for children under the age of ten. In general, seventy-five percent of all network dramatic programs contain violence with over seven violent episodes per program hour.*

Elmendorf argued that television had become a *school for violence and a college for crime* and pleaded with parents to boycott television stations and advertisers if they felt the television programs were too violent. He acknowledged that the United States television industry *made some effort to control the content of violence by instituting the 'family viewing hour'*, although he reported that there were indications that the violent programs were simply re-scheduled to other time slots.

According to Elmendorf, the response of the television industry had been to justify the need for violent programming based on ratings, thus upholding claims that the audience gets what it wants.

In Australia, Downes (1988, p. 6) reported that fictional violence was perhaps easier to regulate, at least in principle, than televised violence on news and current affairs shows. In his introductory statement, Downes reported a dilemma confronted by a television newsman. He said:

> *A few months back Jock Rankin, the head of the ABC-TV news in Melbourne was confronted with the gruesome tale that began with the discovery of a severed penis in a laboratory. It transpired that two derelict friends had fallen out. One had murdered the other, leaving parts of his anatomy around town. Later he cooked strips of flesh in a wok and ate them. If this piece of narrative is appalling, Rankin and his colleagues were faced with the dilemma of telling the story with pictures to a general audience, including children, and the easily shocked. (Moreover, a commercial network had already filmed a re-enactment of the crime.)*

The decision to televise the above item of news and other similar violent news items such as the Hoddle Street massacre and the Queen Street shootings, was not - according to Rankin - a decision of whether to 'run' the story, but a decision of how to treat or present the story. Downes reported that the television industry used violence to attract an audience, although in his concluding paragraphs he acknowledged that:

> *There seems no valid point in showing the aftermaths of accidents and crimes that make up the bulk of commercial television news.*

Phil Wallbank (1987, pp. 1-2), the program director at TAS-TV (Tasmania's commercial television station in the south of the state) said that television stations cater to audience demands. He argued that the program format is based on local and overseas research, letters from the general public as well as phone calls.

He outlined the criteria for 'C' classified programs stating that such programs:

> *...may not carry physical or psychological violence, or violent or assaultive language, in such a manner as to cause alarm or distress to children. References (to violence) must be strictly limited to the context of the storyline.*

In relation to 'PGR' classified programs he stated that examples of violence in such programs:

> *...must be inexplicit, discreet, stylised representations only. These must be appropriate to the storyline or program context. Overly realistic, bloody or horrific depictions are not permitted.* (Ibid)

He said that TAS-TV, like all other commercial television stations, abides by broadcasting standards. In conclusion he said that parents often use television as a scapegoat for their inadequate parenting. According to Wallbank, parents can turn the television to another channel, or off.

John Sorell, director of television news at Channel Nine, similarly supports Wallbank's assertion that news editors are sensitive in their selection of violent material for use in news broadcasts. He said that television, because of its visual nature, must show graphic pictures. He argued that the world was a violent place and therefore the media had to show violence.

Sorell criticised intervention by academics in his following statement:

> *...the one thing that really makes my blood boil is those half-baked academics who keep blasting TV news bulletins saying we show too much violence. Those nit-picking, high-brow connoisseurs of the ivory tower are, or course, encouraged to throw flak by the print media, sour that TV has taken over as the people's main source of news.* (Ibid)

Complaints from the general public have also been received about violence in the printed media. For example, the Tasmanian newspaper, the **Mercury** and other Australian newspapers, were strongly criticised (letters to the Editor; ABC **Media Watch**) for publishing a close-up photograph of a youth with his terror-stricken face impaled on a steel spiked fence. It was argued by critics that the photograph served no useful purpose to its readers.

In July 1989, the Australian Democrats attacked the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), and called for a review of violence on television news bulletins following the ABC's news report showing the severed head of a Victorian murder victim (the **Mercury**, 21 July, 1989, p. 3).

In late August 1988, a Bill was introduced into the Tasmanian House of Assembly, giving the Attorney-General (Mr. Bennett) power to prohibit the sale or hire of excessively violent videos and films. The Bill received royal assent on 8 December, 1988 and was proclaimed approximately six months later. In response to the new State legislation, the opposition spokesman, Mr. Peter Patmore, said: *some wowsers in the community have hijacked people's rights to watch movies.* He argued that while daily television news offered children and adults a diet of excessive violence it was 'hypocritical' to prevent people watching sex in films (the **Mercury**, 25 August, 1988, p. 3).

Just over a year later, in September 1989, following the election of the Tasmanian Labour/Green accord, the Attorney-General (Mr. Peter Patmore, who was previously the opposition spokesman) changed his views about video censorship, saying that he no longer believed that people should have access to videos such as **I Spit on Your Grave, Blood Sucking Freaks, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Pieces, Rosemary's Killer**, because of *significant concerns abroad in the community about violent videos* (the **Mercury**, 18 September, 1989, p. 1). Patmore's action in sending the videos to the Publications Classifications Board for a classification review, was he said, a response to poor parenting. He said that parents were not administering enough control over the type of videos children were watching. Furthermore, he said that discussions with teachers throughout the state revealed that many young children have access to very violent videos. The **Mercury's** editorial on the same day (18 September, 1989, p. 8), condemned government censorship, although the need to protect children was acknowledged. Verbal discussions with members of the Publications Classification Board in December 1989 confirmed that several videos, including **I Spit on Your Grave** - which was rumoured to have been imitated in a Tasmanian sex crime - had been banned in the state of Tasmania and on 25 January, 1990, it was publicly announced on ABC radio, that the videos mentioned above had been banned by the Publications Classification Board.

As a result of growing public concern, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal inquiry into television and violence was implemented. The committee was headed by Miss Deirdre O'Connor and supported by Mr. Michael Ramsden (Australian Broadcasting Tribunal), Dr.

Patricia Edgar (Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation), Professor Peter Sheehan (University of Queensland Professor in Psychology) and Mr. George Negus (journalist). The task of the committee was to investigate complaints and issues submitted by interest groups, organizations and government. The inquiry received a record 1,114 written submissions; many of them suggested that *society could not rely on parents to monitor children's television viewing and called for adults to forgo some freedom to cater for their children's needs* (the **Mercury**, 29 June, 1989, p. 9). A survey, commissioned by the ABT and released in July 1989, reported that 78% of respondents were either 'very concerned' or 'quite concerned' about television violence; and more than 60% of respondents believed that explicit violence, including that in news broadcasts, should be given later time slots. Miss O'Connor, the Chairman of the ABT was reported to have said:

> *A lot of people have a concern about it (television violence) but they are not quite sure what they want done about it...Everyone thinks they can handle violence when they are watching it on TV, but they want to be able to make sure the weak, the children, are protected.* (the **Mercury**, 20 July, 1989, p. 1)

In response to the ABT's investigation into television violence the commercial networks proposed that they could self-regulate violent content on television. According to one newspaper report, (the **Mercury**, 17 October, 1989, p. 14) *Networks Seven, Nine and Ten have offered to produce an industry code to control television violence following the address by the tribunal's chairman, Miss Deirdre O'Connor, to the Australian Institute of Criminology's conference on violence* ... The report also revealed that O'Connor told the conference that:

> *although most Australians agreed that there was too much violence on television, they were suspicious of bureaucratic solutions to the problem ... They have adopted constructive ideas from our options which, if properly carried out, will go a long way towards easing real concerns of Australian viewers.*

In June 1990 the results of the ABT inquiry into violence were publicly announced. In a television interview (**7.30 Report**, ABC), Mr. George Negus confirmed that a substantial proportion of the population were concerned about violence in the media. Survey respondents indicated that they were particularly concerned about violence shown on news and current affairs programs. In relation to the outcome of the inquiry, the results were as expected. The committee recommended that television networks devise and adhere to a uniform self-regulatory code, from which they could deal with violence in the media.

SYNTHESIS

The preceding section reported public concern regarding the seemingly increasing level of violence in the mass media. Wallbank's assertion that a television station caters to the demands of its audience reinforces the view of other media personnel, even though such an assertion conflicts with the perception of the viewing public. The concern regarding violence in the media (particularly in television and films) as expressed by the public, researchers, doctors and politicians has focussed attention on the need to reassess complaints and issues relating to media contents, and an inquiry into television and violence in Australia was implemented. As a result of public concern in Tasmania, steps were taken by the Attorney-General, Mr. Peter Patmore and his predecessor, Mr. John Bennett, which resulted in the banning of several videos which contained violence.

(b) Parental responsibility and intervention at home

Hess and Goldman (1962), Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behaviour (1972), Holman (1980) and Holman and Braithwaite (1982) noted that many parents exert little control over children's television viewing. In their study, Holman and Braithwaite pointed out that even though parents were aware of the undesirable side-effects of television viewing, and accepted responsibility for what their children viewed on television, over half the 154 parents surveyed reported that their children watched programs of which they themselves would disapprove. The researchers also found that a substantial proportion of the pre-schoolers watched television with no parent present.

Unsupervised viewing was similarly reported by Cupit (1986) and Lelong (1989), who indicated that children have seen violent video tapes, often without parental approval or knowledge. As noted above, Cupit found that of the total of 644 video titles identified by his 1,498 sample of 9-12 year old children, only 23% were rated with a G classification (general viewing audience), with the remaining 77% of videos rated as PG, M, R or X. His survey indicated that many of the children had access to such videos at the homes of other people, without parental consent or knowledge.

In a research study conducted by Singer, Zuckerman and Singer (1981) to investigate the relationship between children's television viewing and aspects of family life, it was found that parental viewing habits were the most appropriate indicators of children's television viewing habits. They found that in homes where children watched violent television programs, it was likely that the mother or father similarly watched violent programs. Similarly, children who were heavy television viewers tended to have parents who were also heavy television viewers and did not restrict television viewing. Patterson (1981) similarly agrees that the extent of parental influence and control is perhaps the most significant factor influencing children's television habits. She indicated that television 'talked' to some children more often than parents and in this respect television became the 'third parent', providing children with a pseudo-parent relationship.

Greenfield (1984, p. 52) similarly highlighted the need for parents to select television programs for their children. She said that although parents may differ on the social values they wish to impart to their children, all parents socialize their children according to one set of values or another. By selecting and discussing programs with children, parents could extend the socialization process. Research indicated that when adult interaction occurred during the viewing of a television program, the learning process was enhanced. For example, Greenfield argued that the positive learning effects obtained from television viewing was a result of parental interaction with the child at the time of viewing. She said: *... to a great extent, the gap in learning between disadvantaged and advantaged children closes if the disadvantaged children have an adult to watch and discuss the programs with them.*

It could therefore be inferred that adult intervention in children's television viewing, with parents providing information about television content and processes, may provide children with a better and more realistic understanding of television.

There is considerable evidence to suggest, however, that parents may not be appropriate 'media teachers'. This view is based on several important factors, some of which have already been outlined above. For example, Singer, Zuckerman and Singer (1981) pointed out that many parents, by their own admissions, neither control, or find it difficult to control their children's television viewing habits. Furthermore, they found that parents from poor inner-city neighbourhoods indicated that they would prefer their children home watching television than confronting the dangers of the city streets. Secondly, some parents (as indicated by Singer et al.) were inappropriate role models for their children's

television viewing. For example, parents who were heavy viewers of violence on television exerted little or no control over their children, as well as setting a bad example for their children. Thirdly, Chapter 2 presents evidence to suggest that some parents are insufficiently educated with regard to the media and its effects on the audience. For example, reports of actors portraying doctors in television series receiving thousands of letters from audiences seeking medical advice (Education Department of South Australia, 1983) suggests that some adults are confused by media contents. Such incidents would be likely to reinforce children's misunderstanding of the nature and content of television. With this in mind - together with the limited support, skills and advice available to parents in regard to educating their children about the mass media - it seems likely that parental intervention may not be the most appropriate or reliable approach.

In this study it may be worthwhile to obtain parental and teacher perceptions regarding the need for media education for infant children. Secondly it may also be valuable to find out whether children already ask parents and/or teachers questions about media content or processes. Perhaps children already receive media education from parents or teachers through questioning strategies. And finally both parents and teachers should be given the opportunity to indicate who they believe should be responsible for media education - if they perceive it to be necessary. Children probably use the media more at home than at school and therefore parents have a right to indicate whether they would like schools to take responsibility for something that predominantly occurs in the home. And at the same time, teachers must also be given the opportunity to indicate whether they would feel confident or even want to take on this new task of educating children about the media - particularly when many teachers may perceive it to be the responsibility of parents.

Therefore one of the aims of this study will be to obtain parental and teacher perceptions regarding the need for media education for infant children, as well as identifying the appropriate person to teach media education.

SYNTHESIS

Several variables have been highlighted as factors that may possibly hinder appropriate parental intervention in children's television viewing. The observations made by the Education Department of South Australia and others imply that parents may be inappropriate 'media educators' for their children, given parents' own inaccurate perception of television contents. Singer, Zuckerman and Singer found that parents are reluctant to

intervene in the viewing situation and that some parents use television for self-gratification (e.g. child-minding) purposes and alternatively propose that (a) better television programs should be available to young children; and (b) media education should be introduced to young children in the classroom. The latter view has credibility in light of the current research.

(c) Experimental strategies used to teach children about the media

In addition to formally approved media education courses existing in schools, several studies, designed to investigate the effectiveness of experimental media education strategies, have been implemented. These experimental strategies, generally of United States origin, have taken the following forms: (i) an 'immunization' approach (Doolittle, 1975); (ii) amplification of television contents (Abelman, 1982); (iii) attitude change (Eron, 1982) and (iv) cognitive and non-cognitive coping strategies (Wilson, Hoffner and Cantor, 1987).

Doolittle's (1975) Ph.D. investigation attempted to find a means of dealing with the harmful effects of television violence using an intervention program derived from attitude change theory. In the experiment, 103 sixth grade students were divided into either a 'concept presentation' (passive treatment) group or a 'concept manipulation' (active treatment) group. The concept presentation students heard lectures on aspects of television production (e.g. sound effects, musical effects etc.) and the concept manipulation students participated in media production activities. In addition, both groups of students received an 'immunization' treatment, which was in the form of verbal appeals by the experimenter. Students were told that violence as depicted on television should not be carried over into real life. The treatment was administered over a four week period.

The results indicated that the treatment failed to affect students' perceived reality of television as measured by a follow-up questionnaire. The study found that the 'concept manipulation' treatment increased, rather than decreased students' rates of aggressiveness, although not to a significant extent.

In highlighting methodological weaknesses and problems associated with the experiment, Doolittle pointed out that sixth-graders may already be able to distinguish clearly between reality and fantasy and thus be able to gain little from such instruction. This has been confirmed by several studies indicating that developmental differences are a significant

factor associated with children's understanding of television (Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin, 1978; Sparks, 1986; Wilson and Cantor, 1985).

In addition to methodological shortcomings noted by the author (e.g. contamination through interaction with classmates; experimenter effects, etc.) a further deficiency is clear. Keeping in mind that the primary goal of Doolittle's project was to help children understand that television fiction was *pretend*, it could be argued that his concept manipulation treatment failed to focus on appropriate concepts and materials. For example, closer examination of the concept manipulation treatment revealed that students were given few opportunities to use media equipment. The activities did not include the use of videotape or film equipment although students did use a cassette recorder, a flashlight and stage blood in the activities. It could be argued that the concepts and materials used were not appropriate for the task of educating children about television contents. In comparison to the concept manipulation treatment, the concept presentation group were shown films about television production, editing, stunt fight scenes, sequencing, special effects, and the use of sound in films. In order to teach the children about television, it is likely that television or video equipment would be an essential part of the teaching, particularly in regard to Doolittle's experiment. In essence, the study also evaluated the effectiveness of two contrasting teaching methods; however the legitimacy of the learning treatments could be challenged, as a result of the dichotomy between the qualitative and quantitative natures of the teaching methods.

Singer, Zuckerman and Singer (1981) presented eight media lessons, to eight, nine and ten year old children (3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade) in an attempt to inform children about the nature of television content. The course was administered over a four week period at two schools in Connecticut. The students at each school were matched for IQ, reading scores, ethnicity and socio economic status and served as the experimental and control groups. Each of the eight lessons were introduced to the children in the experimental group by the classroom teacher and observed by the experimenters. The 40 minute lessons were based on a discussion-activity format. The eight lessons were: *The technical side of television; People make programs; Introduction to television; Reality and fantasy on television; Camera effects and special effects; Commercials and the television business; Identification with television characters; Stereotyping on television; Violence and Aggression; and How viewers can influence television.* Their primary objectives were to help children understand the purpose, processes, content and effects of television.

Evaluation of the program was carried out by administering a pre-test two weeks prior to the media lessons and a post-test two weeks following the four week implementation period. The results of the experimental group were compared with test scores of children who undertook the same tests but who did not receive the television curriculum.

Comparison of the results revealed that children in the experimental group showed a greater increase in knowledge about television than those in the control school. They learned more television terms; were more knowledgeable about special effects, commercials, and advertisements; and showed more improvement in their ability to describe the use and effect of camera techniques. A follow up evaluation three months after administering the experimental program indicated that children were still able to recall the information they had learned, according to Singer and colleagues.

This is an important study in terms of the present research because it indicates that children as young as eight, nine and ten are able to learn about the media through planned activities. How would younger children respond to similar media activities? What should the basis of the activities be? Do children from different socio-economic backgrounds require different media education content? These are some questions that remain unanswered and this research will attempt to answer them.

In another experimental study, Abelman (1982) developed curriculum activities and questionnaire material which aimed to amplify the positive effects of television's prosocial content for 156 fourth and sixth grade students in Austin, Texas. Students were designated to either an experimental or control group designed to evaluate differences in children's attitudes towards prosocial television content and the effectiveness of a three-week curriculum intervention treatment. Questionnaires were administered immediately before and after the three week period of curriculum intervention. The objective of week 1 activities was to increase student awareness of their own television viewing by consciously evaluating their television consumption and the nature of television content. In addition students were asked to identify the prosocial and antisocial content of their favourite television programs. The objective of week 2 activities was to teach students about the non-reality of television characters and situations with the desired outcome of establishing an improved discrimination between reality and non-reality. The objective of week 3 activities was to make comparisons between the real world and the world as portrayed on television. Teachers were provided with Teacher's Guides and underwent ten hours of training. They were also encouraged to incorporate their own personal teaching style to the

lessons. The intervention strategy examined cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of attitude, which related to each of the weekly activities. They were:

> *(1) Awareness of television's pro-social and anti-social content, which includes the distinction between the types of programs available on commercial television, the types of behaviors these programs have to offer, and the distinction between television fantasy and reality; (2) a liking for, or appreciation of, television's pro-social offerings in the context of their favorite programs; and (3) attention toward, and preference for, pro-social behavior in their own and others behavioral repertoire, which includes an identification with television characters and their likely solutions to problems/conflict*. (Abelman, 1982, pp. 92-93)

Results indicated that the curriculum intervention program had an impact on children's cognition regarding television's content. For example, fourth and sixth grade students in the experimental group recalled significantly more factual information (i.e. ability to recall types of programs) than the control group, and fourth grade students recalled more information than the sixth grade students in the control group. Changes in the children's attitudes about television were also apparent. For example, both fourth and sixth grade students who underwent the experimental condition demonstrated some change in their perception of why television characters hurt each other, even though this was not statistically significant. But there was a significant change in fourth grade students' perceived reality of the television characters 'J.R. Ewing (**Dallas**) and the **Dukes of Hazzard** family following the curriculum intervention. The researcher reported that *there was a marked increase in the children's perception that the characters were 'made up' and a decrease in their confusion of whether they were real ('don't know')*. However, children's perception of the transformational character of the 'Hulk' did not significantly differ after the completion of the three week curriculum intervention as the children in the study already perceived the character to be fictional.

Among the methodological weaknesses of the study, the intervention strategy offered the same curriculum to both fourth and sixth grade students, and did not take into consideration different ages of the children or their different stages of development. Abelman's introduction provided the reader with theories of stages of development, which clearly indicated that his subjects (children in grade 4 and grade 6) fell into two different stages of development, i.e. the sub-period of concrete operations (7-11+ years), and the period of formal operations (12+ years). As the ages of the subjects were not given, it is difficult to determine the number of children who may have been in each category. Further evidence of the inappropriateness of the intervention strategy used was given by Abelman when he pointed out that teachers reported students' frustration with the activities, restlessness when

activities did not incorporate video examples of concepts under investigation, and lack of visual stimuli. Older students were frustrated by watching television and preferred discussions.

The foregoing discussion of children's developmental differences as a significant factor to be considered when implementing activities for children of different ages and different ability is not only relevant to the literature review, but also to the methodological framework of this study.

Wilson, Hoffner and Cantor (1987) compared the effectiveness of cognitive and non-cognitive coping strategies as a means of reducing children's television fear reactions. Cognitive coping strategies included behaviour such as discussing television program contents with a parent and non-cognitive coping strategies included such behaviour as holding a blanket or toy. Using self-report procedures, 115 children (40 four-to-five year old children; 41 six-to-seven year old children; and 39 nine-to-eleven year old children) were asked to indicate whether any of five coping strategies presented to them in picture form would be likely to help them if they were scared by something on television. The five pictorial strategies were: (1) holding onto a blanket or soft toy; (2) obtaining something to eat or drink; (3) leaving the room; (4) discussing program contents with a parent; and (5) 'telling yourself the incident on television is not real'. The results of the study supported the researchers' developmental hypotheses by suggesting that the reported effectiveness of cognitive coping strategies increased with the age of the child. Younger children reported non-cognitive strategies such as holding onto a toy or blanket as effective, whereas older children did not report such behaviour as effective. Cognitive strategies such as discussing the program with an adult tended to be more effective with older than for younger children. Sitting by a parent was perceived to be effective for all age groups, although the researchers did not establish whether this strategy was perceived to be effective because of its cognitive or non-cognitive value. For example, sitting by a parent may be perceived as physically comforting to some children while others may perceive in the contact potential for interactive discussion of program content. The researchers concluded that cognitive techniques may be less effective with preschool children than with older children, and suggested that simple non-cognitive strategies like sitting next to a child - regardless of age - may have beneficial effects on the child in reducing media-induced fear. It should be pointed out however, that the results of this study were obtained from children's self-reports of fright reactions and their perceptions of the effectiveness of various strategies for reducing fright reactions to the media. Wilson et. al. reported that children do experience

fright reactions to the mass media and that children liked to see programs that contained frightening content.

Eron (1982, pp. 200-210) reports on the Chicago Circle study, a three-year longitudinal survey conducted in the United States which investigated the relationship between television violence and aggression in first and third grade children (grades at the introduction of the study). During the study the researchers decided to introduce an intervention program aimed at reducing the aggressive behaviour of 169 'high violence' viewers. In the second year of the study these high violence viewers were randomly assigned to one of two groups: (i) the experimental group which was exposed to three training sessions designed to help children discriminate television fantasy from real life events; and (ii) the control group which spent a similar amount of time watching folk dancing and learning about such activities. The experimental intervention group were shown excerpts from violent programs and were informed about how the sound and visual effects were used to simulate reality. The intervention program had no effect on the experimental subjects in helping them discriminate between television fantasy and real life behaviour. However, the researcher indicated that the following year a strong effect did show up which may have been a 'sleeper' effect - that is, a delayed learning effect may have occurred as a result of intervention strategy.

In the third year, the researchers introduced a new training procedure with the subjects. The procedure consisted of attitude change techniques, in which each of the experimental subjects was asked to write a paragraph on *why television violence is unrealistic and why viewing too much of it is bad.* Children wrote the paragraph, received suggestions, then videotaped themselves and their fellow students reading the paragraphs, with the belief that it was going to be shown to other children. The control group also made a videotape but it was about what they did last summer. Analysis of the data four months later indicated that there was a highly significant difference between the peer-nominated aggression score for the experimental group compared with that of the control group, although a year previously they had been equal in score. The researchers concluded that it may be possible to break into this cycle with a simple intervention and short circuit the connection between television and violence and aggression. However, they point out that there is *less chance for successful intervention when children identify strongly with television characters and believe that the violence they perceive on television is an accurate description of real life.*

SYNTHESIS

The foregoing discussion of research into media education/intervention strategies trialled in the United States, is mainly concerned with experimental strategies aimed at changing children's attitudes to television content. Even though these studies (with the exception of Wilson, Hoffner and Cantor's study) are concerned with media intervention strategies used with older children (8 years +) they are regarded as particularly important because they provide a useful insight into children's responses to media (television) education and the need to acknowledge children's age/stage differences in planning media education activities, and highlight potential methodological problems. The importance of Singer, Singer and Zuckerman's study lies in the fact that they implemented and evaluated school-based media education lessons that aimed to demystify television to elementary grade children. There is still however, a need for further systematic research, not only to test this research (conducted almost ten years ago in the United States of America) with younger children, but also to build a foundation for media education, by evaluating and analysing children's, parents' and teachers' perception of infant children's understanding and use of the entertainment media generally.

It is unlikely that there is any quick or easy solution to teaching children about the media. The complex and changing nature of the media, its pervasiveness and the complex nature of its audience suggest that media education, based on the the immediate needs of infants may be an appropriate intervention strategy. Unlike other subject areas that are based on academic goals, media education may need to be based on 'health' or 'social education'. That is, infant children might need to learn about the media in order to prevent misunderstandings as a result of exposure to media reality and fantasy. On the other hand, most education for infants is to prepare them for more advanced academic work, aimed at developing intellectual skills for the future. Media education is about the present needs of children.

The following sections present an overview of the current state of media education in each Australian state.

3.3 Media education in Australian schools

Prior to the 1970s media education text books were virtually non-existent, but in recent years a number of books about media education for secondary school use have become available. But there remains a shortage of media education text books for infant and

primary teachers, although there has been an increasing interest in developing media education materials for this age group. Since the early 1980s, draft media curriculum materials for primary and secondary schools have emerged and been informally distributed within the curriculum networks throughout Australia. This work, although contributing significantly to the development of media education in Australia, is unco-ordinated and primarily based on ad hoc ideas about media processes. The most recent initiatives in media education will be discussed in this research.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, even though the Senate Standing Committee strongly supported the concept of media education, responses to the Committee's recommendations by State Education Departments were slow and to a large degree unco-ordinated. By 1989, some states had produced comprehensive media curricula for primary and secondary schools with the support of considerable resources, while other states such as Tasmania lacked both financial and human resources (and perhaps commitment by the State Education Department) to undertake such a task. Overall this resulted in little progress being made in the area of media education policy or curriculum development in Tasmania.

During the next few pages media education policy in each Australian state will be discussed.

(a) Mass Media Education in Tasmania

Apart from Canavan's mass media education for Catholic Schools, one of the earliest Australian mass media education documents containing a rationale and activities for teaching mass media in primary schools came from the Tasmanian Education Department. The school-based handbook, prepared by Freestone and Hanson (1979) contained a 'bank of ideas' for using media in the classroom. Its broad aims were to:-

> *use 'media' to develop children's communication and thinking capabilities;*
> *enable children to find out more about the 'media';*
> *encourage children to develop critical approaches towards 'media' and to work out their own opinions;*
> *create opportunities through the use of 'media' or children to develop skills and understandings.* (Freestone and Hanson, 1979, p. 2).

The approach advocated by Freestone and Hanson was based on child-centred learning principles, aimed at developing children's observation, exploration, recording, reporting,

collaboration, playing, speculation, and conceptualisation skills - dissenting from the authoritarian position previously adopted by the Catholic education system. The Catholic education approach to media education was based on paternalistic notions of education, in that the teacher was the initiator of expert advice and opinions, whereas Freestone and Hanson believed that the design, selection and implementation phases of media activities are best suited to negotiation between teacher and the learner - to illuminate the learning needs, interests and expectations of the children, as well as to clarify the intentions and purposes of the activities. This approach represents a shift from the traditional manner of teaching/learning towards an alternative mediatory role for the teacher, which was further expounded by Masterman (1980).

The activities were based around print, audio-visual and sound media, with particular emphasis on techniques, advertising, characters in the media, the audience, topical issues and information presentation. Of particular interest to this study, the authors highlighted the need for teachers to be aware of the interests and learning needs of the students. The writers noted that:

> *curiosity to find out more is one of the most powerful forces behind effective learning in children. Interest and curiosity are closely linked in the learner. As children's interests are often transient, idiosyncratic and constantly changing, a careful balance between these pressures and the learning purposes, as viewed by the teacher and the child, needs to be kept in order to sustain curriculum work involving use of the 'media'* (Op. cit. p. 14).

Freestone and Hanson argue that because of children's developmental differences in learning, there must be opportunities for *a breadth of experiences in media activities, as well as a developmental sequence within and between 'media' activities.* Furthermore, according to the writers: *The teacher's appraisal of the needs of each learner and his achievements will indicate whether the selection of 'media' activities should be towards more experiences of a similar kind or experiences at a higher level of learning* (Op. cit. p. 8). The perspective provided by Freestone and Hanson implies that a prescriptive media education curriculum may not be appropriate for young children.

Similar school-based initiatives were devised and implemented in other Tasmanian infant schools. For example, this author implemented a course for infant children at North Chigwell Primary School over a three year period from 1982 to 1984 (Chung, 1983; 1984). Using various organizational approaches (thematic, integrated, elective and workshop) to teach infant children about the mass media, Chung implemented child-centred

activities with five-to-eight year old children. In relation to media education and infants Chung (1984, p. 25) said:

> *...young children need to discover and uncover the mystique of the event (media) through concrete experiences. That is, to unriddle the complexities of television, children should be given the opportunity to simulate effects that evoke curiosity and interest.*

Using simulation exercises, games, practical activities and discussions, the infant children demystified media processes and products and came to understand the representational nature of the mass media. Chung noted that the class discussions provided the basis for activities, often revealing children's areas of concern (e.g. violence, injuries, etc.). In this sense the media education course served the emotional needs of the children (to a limited extent), although not to the extent that the current research indicated to be desirable. This early work of Chung formed the basis for the present research study. The present study goes beyond this early work in that it acknowledges the importance of parental input into media content as well as the need to base the activities on specific areas that are seen to be the cause of concern. In this research, it is envisaged that as well as finding out what effects the media has on children (from previous research, parents, teachers and children), perhaps parents and teachers should also be asked about potential teaching topics for media education. In this sense the media education content would be negotiated between parents and teachers.

In 1984 the Tasmanian chapter of the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) was formed with the intention of raising the profile of media education in the state and of serving as a springboard for statewide media curriculum ideas. But over the six year period since its inception little progress has been made towards a media curriculum document.

In the Tasmanian Mass Media Education Draft 5 (a collaborative effort, edited by Tyson, 1989, p. 1) it is stated:

> *Mass media education should comprise components from both the print and electronic media categories. Emphasis should be given to the electronic media, particularly television and video, because of their importance and influence in our lives.*

The document presented six reasons for teaching mass media education in all schools, although several of these overlap. These major reasons relate to the time students spend with media, the socializing influence of the media, the media's ability to present selective views of society, and the functional use of media. According to the aims and objectives of the Tasmanian media document, mass media education aims to *increase students'*

understanding of mass media functions, processes and effects using a *comprehensive and coherent approach extending from Kindergarten to grade 12*. The objectives of mass media education are designed to help children develop:

> *the knowledge, skills and attitudes to analyse media products (by interpreting the ways in which the mass media construct 'realities');*
>
> *skills in the practical use of media (by becoming confident, competent and articulate makers of mass media products for different audiences and purposes);*
>
> *understanding of the social and cultural implications of the media messages and the motivation and purposes of their constructors (by developing an awareness of social, political, cultural, and economic effects of media products);*
>
> *an evaluative framework by which to assess the adequacy, accuracy and aesthetics of media products (by developing criteria to appreciate, evaluate and use the aesthetic and expressive potential of the media, and by making decisions about media content);*
>
> *understanding about their own motivation for use of media (by identifying their patterns of media use and reflecting on the factors which influence their choices) (1989, p. 3).*

Furthermore, the document stressed that the most important and central contents of media education are the 'key concepts' which are derived from media processes. Key concepts include the media's ability to filter 'realities' selectively, the media's intentions, audience interpretation of media messages, and the codes and conventions of media language. The teaching and learning model adopted by the Tasmanian mass media course developers bears a strong resemblance to the New South Wales mass media studies discussion paper. Based on the principle that the 'mass media re-present reality', four inter-dependent variables were chosen as a means of examining the mass media. The model is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below:

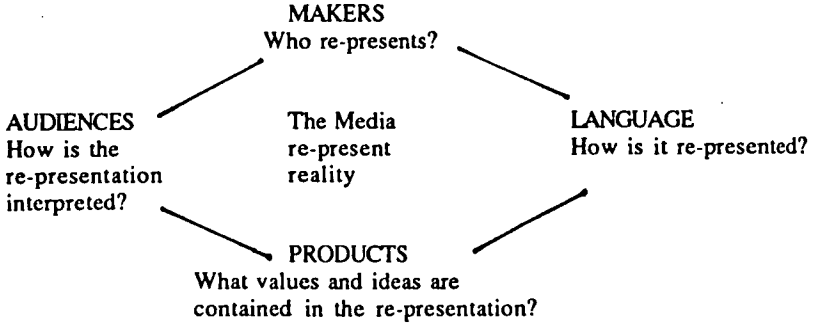


Figure 3.1: A model for teaching and learning about the Mass Media (Tasmanian Mass Media Education Draft 5, June 1989, p. 7).

According to the model, the media are involved in the construction of reality rather than reflection or transmission of reality. As far as Tyson is concerned, ***the media construct reality by selecting and combining words, images, sounds which recreate and represent the world.*** (1989, p. 5). However, in looking at his model for teaching about the media, Tyson states that the media **re-present reality**. His conception of the media lacks credibility because, in theoretical terms, the two ideas are inconsistent. Without getting into a lengthy rhetorical argument, suffice it to say that the construction of reality implies a process or act of building something that is real or exists, independent of human awareness. On the other hand, to re-present (as opposed to represent or construct) reality is to 'present reality again'. It therefore could be argued that the perception of objects or images presented by the media is not of the object, but a representation of it. In this sense, the media does not reconstruct reality or re-present reality. Furthermore, many of the mass media products are far removed from reality, that is, they are fantasy creations of the imagination and therefore do not represent or re-present reality in any way. For example, films such as **The Labyrinth, Never Ending Story** and books such as Lewis Carroll's **Alice in Wonderland** or Jacob Grimm's **Snow White** and television's **Dr. Who** represent the fantasy manifestations of the storyteller's imagination. It could also be argued that seemingly life-like television programs such as **Murder, she wrote** or **Mike Hammer** do not represent reality because the proportion of violence depicted in the storyline does not correspond to actual violence in the real world. In this sense, this study argues that the mass media produces and presents varying degrees of representations of reality as well as varying degrees of representations of fantasy.

It should be noted that media education courses are offered to student teachers at Tasmanian tertiary institutions. For example, the University of Tasmania offers post-graduate and in-service courses in educational media and mass media studies in education. These courses operate at the post-graduate level, and are not available to pre-service teachers. Since the inception of the mass media in education course over four years ago, approximately fifty percent of the student enrolments were from non-teaching students who work in a non-teaching area such as nursing, with the remaining students teaching upper-primary and older children. Interestingly, no infant teachers have ever enrolled in the course. Thus, at present no Tasmanian infant teachers have any formal education regarding the mass media.

(b) Mass Media Studies in New South Wales (kindergarten - Grade 6)

In March 1981, the NSW Director-General of Education, Mr. D. Swan, released a General Policy Statement in relation to mass media education. The statement, which was distributed to regional directors and principals of schools, highlighted the impact of the mass media on society and the need for school to provide media education. The statement read:

> *Schools have traditionally devoted a great deal of time to teaching children to read and comprehend written language. However, the curriculum of schools should be broadened to ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop an understanding of the mass media forms which rely on means of communication other than the printed word. Children should develop an understanding of the nature of the media, so that they can recognise the importance of a particular message, discern its relevance to them and interpret it in the light of family and community expectations. To assist children to attain those ends, teachers need to be familiar with and understand, the workings of the mass media.*
>
> *The policy, therefore, recognises the existence of, acknowledges the importance of, and seeks to encourage the discriminating use and understanding of, these modern means of communication.*

In relation to policy, the document states:

> *Mass media education studies should flow through the whole school curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12 (K-12). Just as schools have always accepted their responsibility to teach children to read, write and calculate, they must now adopt a similar responsibility with regard to the teaching of media literacy. If today's children are to develop all their communication skills, media literacy must take its place alongside other important skills such as movement, reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy. As with other communication skills, it is essential that every teacher takes the opportunity to be a teacher of mass media.*(p. 2)

The policy statement noted that media literacy at the Primary level (K-Grade 6) should be a study *in its own right as well as an integrated part of the daily curriculum* and argued that learning activities should be structured and practical in nature, emphasising child development principles.

Three years later (1984) a booklet titled **All About Mass Media Education K-12** was produced by the New South Wales Directorate of Studies, with the intention of facilitating the implementation of mass media studies in schools. The document, based on the earlier policy statement, presented a general overview of the aims, rationale and areas to be investigated and included teaching ideas.

More recently (March 1988) the New South Wales Directorate has released a comprehensive draft mass media studies K-Grade 6 curriculum statement for discussion purposes. This was accompanied by an evaluation questionnaire in which respondents were asked to consider the support material, reference list and layout of the draft publication.

The 84 page draft media studies curriculum statement acknowledged the significant role that television plays in the life of the K-Grade 6 children and in so doing provided a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between children and television based primarily on learning theory. According to the draft curriculum statement:

> *Children require no encouragement to watch television, they take to it effortlessly at a very early age. However, while learning to watch television occurs readily, it is a mistake to assume that children's cognitive facilities are suspended while they watch television. A process of 'reading', similar to that which occurs with written texts, is taking place. Also, in watching television shows, children use the material they see and hear to test and extend their understanding of their personal and social worlds* (1988, p. 3).

The report indicates that children of all ages *learn by viewing and imitation of television actions and language* (p. 11). However, contrary to evidence discussed in Chapter 3, the report claims that such television viewing takes place within an interactive environment with family members providing responses to children's comments and questioning. As has been noted, many parents do not watch television programs with their children and therefore are unable to assist them make sense of television content by providing additional information.

In concluding the section specifically relating to the **'K- 6 Child and Television'** the report lists four implications for teaching, which reflect the views of Freestone and Hanson presented earlier. These are:

> *(1) Find out what children watch on television; how they watch, what skills they use and what they gain from it.*

It is envisaged that this information will form the basis for planning media education experiences.

> *(2) Respect children's pleasure in their favourite television programs.*

(3) Develop an understanding of the relationship between children and television.

It is envisaged that these points would assist the planning of activities based on media techniques, audiences and program nature.

(4) Build on what children know and value. (p. 14)

Based on learning and child development theory, the New South Wales mass media statement assumes that in order to increase understanding of the media it is desirable to relate new knowledge to children's existing experiences. This would seem to be a sensible approach because it centres the learning situation on the interests of the children.

The overall aim of mass media education in New South Wales was to *assist students to develop attitudes, understanding and skills which help them to:*

- *interpret the ways in which the mass media actively construct realities*
- *develop an awareness of social, political, cultural and economic implications of the construction of mass media products.*
- *become confident, competent and articulate makers of mass media products*
- *appreciate, evaluate and use the aesthetic and expressive potential of the media* (p. 22).

Figure 3.2 below illustrates the New South Wales mass media studies model.

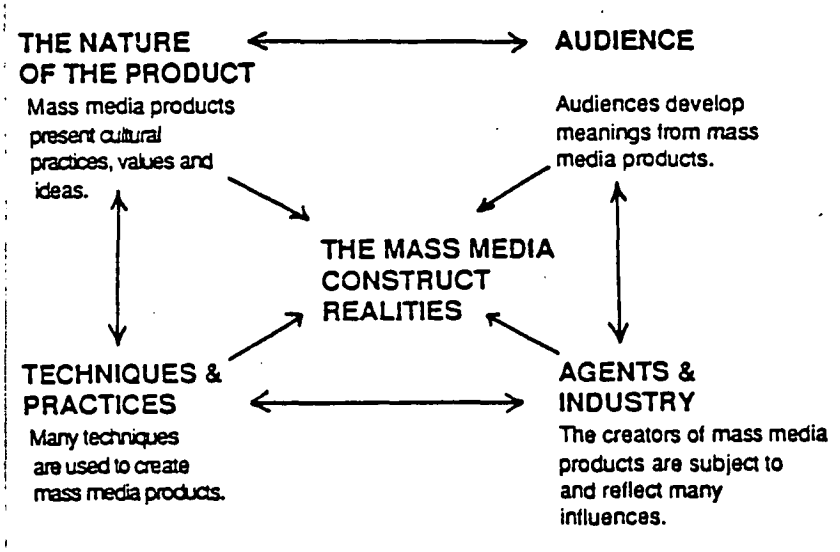


Figure 3.2: New South Wales Media Studies model depicting the key areas of investigation. (Draft Mass Media Studies document, March 1988, p. 29.)

The New South Wales objectives for mass media studies are subdivided into (i) knowledge objectives (ii) skill objectives (deconstruction, context analysis and construction skills) and (iii) feelings, values and attitudes objectives which relate to developmentally sequenced learning activities and experiences. Listed below are what students are expected to be able to do in the first two levels. Three levels of experience are proposed for primary levels, so the researcher has assumed that infants would begin with Level 1 and possibly move on to Level 2. Level 1 states that students, after completing mass media activities, should be able to: -

- *recognise media products in their world (Audience)*
- *identify the elements of media products, such as non-verbal components, colour, shape, size, texture, sequencing etc. (Techniques and Practices)*
- *identify the programs that they enjoy (Audiences)*
- *make media products of their own (Techniques and Practices)* (p. 76)

Level 2 suggests that students should be able to:-

- *recognise a particular genre, e.g. advertisement, comedy, drama, etc. (Nature)*
- *manipulate simple techniques, e.g. framing, camera angle (Techniques and Practices)*
- *interpret sound and picture (Techniques and Practices)*
- *reflect on what they watch and why they watch (Audience)*
- *research their class and school as sources of information about audiences (Audience)*
- *identify points of view in simple communication (Nature)*
- *identify and use techniques of persuasion used in the media (Techniques and Practices)*
- *understand that media products are produced by a team of people (Agents and Industry)* (p. 77).

It is not until Level 4 (a post-primary level of experience) that students are introduced to the media's impact on the lives of its audience. It will be argued that the New South Wales mass media curriculum, although aware of the relationship of infant children to television, does not reflect the psychological and social needs of infant children. The implications of this will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Catholic education system was a prominent force in the early development of mass media education in New South Wales. Geretschlaeger (1982) noted that media education existed in some Catholic schools as early as the 1960s and early 1970s with the intention of making students more critical and appreciative of the mass media. In 1972, an interim curriculum document was produced for teaching mass media education in the primary school, and this was supported by in-service workshops for teachers and activity books for

children. In 1975, more comprehensive curriculum guidelines were published for Catholic Primary schools (Years 1-6). The desired outcomes of the curriculum included:

> *4.1 An ability to be appreciative users of the mass media.*
> *4.2 A general understanding of the nature and techniques of television, film, press and radio in our society.*
> *4.3 Development of the skills necessary to use the media intelligently. This includes evaluating critically what is read in newspapers and magazines, what is viewed on television and film and what is heard on the radio.*
> *4.4 Development of the skills necessary to exercise discrimination in the use of the mass media.*
> *4.5 Development of truly human and Christian attitudes and value judgements regarding the media.*
> *4.6 A foundation for the building of a sense of individual and social responsibility for the content presented by the media.*
> *4.7 Making better use of television, film, radio and the press in the teaching of the secular subjects and Catechetics.* (p. 21)

The curriculum was divided into two sections, based on the media habits and reading skills of young children. Media education for Year 1, 2 and 3 children was limited to the study of television whereas years 4, 5 and 6 studied television, film, the press and radio. Ten objectives for the study of television by children in years 1-3 were offered as guidelines for determining what was to be learned. The objectives, as stated in the 1975 Mass Media education Curriculum Guidelines are:

> *1. The pupil will be able to comprehend what he or she views on TV.*
> *2. The pupil will be able to verbally recall highlights of programmes viewed.*
> *3. The pupil will be aware that TV presents different types of programmes.*
> *4. The pupil will be able to differentiate between:*
> *(a) programmes and commercials;*
> *(b) situations that are true and those that are false;*
> *(c) situations that are good and those that are bad;*
> *(d) situations that are real and those that are unreal;*
> *(e) situations that are important and those that are unimportant.*
> *5. The pupil will be able to understand and interpret the principal themes in programmes he or she views.*
> *6. The pupil will be able to form and express an opinion on the TV programmes viewed.*
> *7. The pupil will be aware of the need to select TV programmes carefully.*
> *8. The pupil will be able to discriminate between two programmes that are to be aired simultaneously.*
> *9. The pupil will be able to make some evaluation at the conclusion of a TV programme.*

> *10. The pupil will be able to state why he or she watched a particular programme.* (p. 23)

Learning experiences were generally based on teacher-initiated questions such as *What did you watch on TV last evening? Do any TV characters frighten you?* or *Can you recall a TV show that had both 'happy' and 'sad' parts?* Few 'practical' learning experiences, such as engaging children in the production of an advertisement, or allowing children to create a television character using special effects make-up, were mentioned for year 1 students. The demystification of television through practical activities was not included as a means of learning about television content or processes. Similarly the Year 2 and 3 students were predominantly exposed to question-type exercises designed to elicit discussion. In terms of media education, practical activities might be of considerable value to young children in helping them come to understand how the media creates images. At the infant level, almost all learning takes place through 'hands-on' experiences.

In discussing the aims of media education in the early grades (K- Grade 4) Brother Kelvin Canavan said:

> *The AIM of media education in the early grades is to have young children begin to respond and react to what they see on television in order to predispose them to the subsequent development of appreciative and critical attitudes to television.* (1978, p. 11).

(c) Mass Media Studies in Victoria (K-Year 3)

In 1976 the Joint Committee for the Study of Film and Television was established in Victoria. Its purpose was to advise the Education Department on media education matters. In 1981 a media studies course was given Year 12 Higher Schools Certificate (HSC) accreditation (Geretschlaeger, 1982, p. 56). According to **Mediagraph: 35** (1981, p. 2) *In designing the course the working party consulted with media teachers, curriculum and resource advisers, lecturers in the field and people employed in media industries.* It is interesting to note that they did not consult parents or children. The content of the course provided

> *an appropriate background to tertiary courses at Latrobe University, Deakin University, RMIT, Swinburne Institute of Technology, Caulfield Institute*

of Technology, Rusden State College of Victoria (SCV), Ballarat College of Advanced Education, and Melbourne State College.

In 1987 a 'primitive'(so-called by the committee) draft of *work in progress* on Media Education Frameworks stated in its overview of media education that: *Media Education challenges educators and students to ask questions about the mass media in order to gain a better understanding of how it affects them, how it operates, and how it conveys ideas* (p. 5). More recently (1989) an integrated mass media curriculum document was produced for K-Grade 3 children containing teaching ideas aimed at developing understanding of:

- *the media forms available*
- *uses of different media*
- *media forms in a multicultural society*
- *the nature of advertising in the media*
- *changes in media over time.*

and to develop skills in:

- *using different media as information sources.*
- *interpreting messages in many forms*
- *analysing the structure of media forms - television, newspapers*

and to develop:

- *an interest in the media*
- *the ability to discriminate between television programs*
- *an awareness of the persuasive nature of advertising and its effects (p. 116)*

The curriculum sought to teach children about television, newspapers, magazines, books, technology and the media by integrating the mass media activities with the more traditional classroom activities such as language, mathematics, music etc. The document identified fourteen concepts which were based on media products, purposes and audiences, from which arose the 'focus question': *How do the media affect our lives?* Following the focus question, nineteen contributing questions, based on the media forms, television, newspapers, magazines and books and media technology were asked. These questions served as the teaching objective and formed the basis for developing central or related media activities which were then linked to other curriculum activities using cognitive and affective processes as the integrative vehicle. For example, in relation to the 'television' curriculum material, as the 'central activity' the teacher was asked to list programs watched by children on television. The related activities included collecting pictures of television

characters and personalities from magazines or writing stories about favourite characters. The cognitive skills and affective skills were identified as *'communicating'* and *'developing a sense of co-operation'*. Further activities, designed to consolidate skills and learning processes through integrating subject matter, included language activities such as listing all words with double consonants from children's listing of television programs.

In conclusion, the integrative curriculum as outlined in the document provides the teacher with a general curriculum for media education, but it is unlikely to contribute to children's understanding of the focus question: *How do the media affect our lives?* It could be argued that the activities are too general and are based on discussions in most cases, rather than practical activities. In fact some of the activities (e.g. making a large cut-out television through which children make announcements through the 'screen') may reinforce children's misunderstanding of television rather than increase their understanding of it. The activities are teacher initiated. There is no attempt to ask the children what they want to know about television or what confuses them about the media. A third problem with the curriculum is that it is not only culture specific, but state and time specific. For example, the curriculum lists specific television programs, radio stations, books etc. that are only available to Victoria - and possibly only some areas. This may be an attempt to be practical, but if the curriculum was implemented in areas where teachers had no knowledge of such programs, problems could arise. Media programs change rapidly and what might be available on the media before the curriculum document goes to print may be entirely different after a document is printed. In such a case the curriculum would already be out of date.

(d) Mass Media Education in South Australia (R-7)

In 1982 the Education Department of South Australia produced their **R-7 Media Lab**, which consisted of mass media activity-based lessons for children of primary age. The **R-7 Media Lab** was based on five core areas of media study, which are identified as : media language, purposes, form and content, media in society and development of the media. The classroom activities arising from the 'core' areas are based on learning levels which relate to children's stages of cognitive development.

In the **R-12 Media Education** curriculum document it is stated that:

> *There is a need for schools to assist children in becoming alert consumers of any information. Through a study of the media students can increase the appreciation of the positive aspects of media such as the rapid dissemination of important information and the accessibility to art and culture not otherwise available to them.* (1982, p. 4).

The Education Department perceived its educational responsibility in respect to media education to be to : *educate children so that they have the necessary skills and understanding not to be manipulated by the media but instead to comprehend, appreciate and realise their potential* (p.7) with the stated aim to: *provide students with skills and understandings about the process of communication via the media and the social and cultural implications of this process.* (p. 13)

Figure 3.3 below illustrates the R-12 media concepts for each of the five core areas of media education at the primary and secondary level. It is not until children reach learning level 10 and 11 that they receive information and activities regarding the emotional influence of television and other audience effects. Activities in learning level 1 consist of activities based on children's ability to (a) identify and use colour, texture, size and shape in a picture; (b) identify why people buy things; (c) identify advertisements and identify some real life events that are not depicted in the media (d) identify the history of media forms; and (e) make and project an image onto a screen and demonstrate the focussing and magnifying properties of a lens (Development of the media). Activities include asking children to cut out and sort magazine pictures according to colour; making a coloured cellophane filter to use for viewing and describing changes that have occurred as a result of the coloured filter; projecting children's drawings (illustrations on plastic sheets) using an overhead projector; constructing a tin can telephone for one-to-one communication; magnifying pictures using a magnifying glass etc. Many of the activities at the level 1 and level 2 learning stages would not be identified by infant students as *media* activities. The prescribed activities do not relate to infant children's use of the media; they do not reflect what children are currently watching on television etc. - a point that is recognized as an important objective of the course (p.11). It is unlikely that children would gain an understanding of the mass media from the activities. For example, the activity relating to media language on the topic of visual grammar involves an activity aimed at making children aware of texture through identifying and using different textures in the environment. Children are exposed to different textures in the environment whilst

blindfolded on a 'sensory walk' and later asked to describe the textures. It is most unlikely that infant children would understand this activity in relation to mass media.

The chart shows the concepts relevant to each core area of study at primary school

Learning level	Media language	Purposes	Form and content	Media in society	Development of the media
1	Visual grammar	Consumerism	Advertising Bias	Communication Media origins	Projection Magnifying and focussing
2	Sequencing Sound effects Special effects	Advertising	Animation	Mass communication	Persistence of vision Mechanical process
3	Stereotypes Sound effects Animation Visual grammar	Values Advertising	Stereotypes Programme elements	Values	Magnifying and focussing Mechanical process
4	Visual grammar Animation Special effects	Advertising Visuals and meaning	Programme elements	Values Programming	Properties of film stock Chemical process
5	Visual grammar Animation	Values Programme intention Communication	Programme elements Programming	Viewing patterns	Mechanical process Film soundtracks Animation
6	Visual grammar Sequencing	Advertising Values	Programme elements Programming	Media usage	Transmission Radio reception Media pioneers Persistence of vision
7	Media production	Advertising Bias	Programming	Values Media ownership	Persistence of vision Media pioneers TV transmission TV production

Concepts about the media covered in each core area at the secondary level

Learning level	Media language	Purposes	Form and content	Media in society	Development of the media
8-9	Editing principles Planning visual communication Improving visual communication Composition and meaning Media sounds	Communication theory Intention/explicit Target audience Lobby groups	Radio programming Magazine content Radio content TV: what's on Current affairs Comparing media	Media usage: when? how? why? how much? "Real" v. media experience Children & media wants v. needs	Development of mass communication Print media Photography Australian film Radio and TV New media
10	Lighting techniques Medium and message Editing sound Graphics Animation	Levels of intention Point of view Emotional effect Fact and opinion	Media venues Influence of audience National influences on media Economic influences on media Media conventions	Influence of "news" Effects of entertainment Identifying opinion Personality making Violence and media	Development of media industry Print media audiences Radio to TV Impact of new media
11	Emotional techniques Creating mood Experimental media Bias Media research	Media bias Implicit meaning Implicit advertising Audience intention	Media for adolescents Censorship: local, national Standards Governmental control Monitoring media	Stereotypes: men, women, unions, others Political images Media influence on society Legislation Censorship	Economics and technology Social effect of technology Australia's film industry Public access radio Australian TV Significant inventions
12	Selection of topics such as "Australian Media", "Documentary" or "Censorship" which require specific application of skills and knowledge in each of the five core areas of study.				

Figure 3.3: R-12 media concepts for each of the five core areas of media education at the South Australian primary and secondary school level. (R-12 Media Studies, 1983, p. 20)

Similarly, the activity - coming under the development of the media - which is aimed at teaching children about magnifying and focussing, serves as another example of how the South Australian course fails to relate activities to children's media experiences. For example, children were asked to look at pictures from a magazine with the aid of a magnifying glass and then asked to describe what they saw. The activity concludes with a verbalization or written report of the effect they observed. The value of this activity, and others like this throughout the primary curriculum, is highly debatable because it is difficult to see how they help children understand the media. It will be argued that the South Australian media education curriculum is inappropriate for infant or perhaps primary school children because of its abstract relationship to children's media experiences. It is therefore concluded that such a course could not contribute to mass media education for infant children.

Mass media activities at the infant level need to be explicit. There needs to be a clear and unmistakable relationship between the activity and children's experience of the mass media. Concrete examples, explicitly aimed at a part of the media known and easily identifiable to the children, are necessary.

The approach taken by the South Australian Education Department assumes a teacher-initiated, authoritarian approach. The activities are implemented and directed by the teacher. They are not child-centred in that they do not relate to the needs of the children and are not initiated by the children; they lack the vision of previous research into the effects of television on children and many of the activities are too tenuously related to the media.

(e) Mass Media Studies in Australian Capital Territory

In early 1989, the ACT Schools Authority released a Media Studies Curriculum Framework Draft No. 5. This working document identified media studies as *a relevant, challenging study of the mass communication media* (p. 2) and said:

> *Media studies explores how the media works - how media products are created; the special language and conventions of each of the media; how audiences respond to the media; influences on media producers and products; and the influence of the media on individuals and society* (p. 2).

The draft recognises that

> *children are immersed in the media from an early age, and uses the children's experience and knowledge of the media to foster greater understanding of how the media works, and to develop increased power as media consumers.* (Ibid)

The rationale for media studies is based on the need for children to understand the use and function of the media as well as its effects on the audience.

The curriculum content is based on three elements: *producers*, *media* and *audience*, through which students are encouraged to create media products and hence demystify media conventions and codes in order to develop an appreciation of how the mass media work and the way in which the media influences their audiences.

In relation to the teaching and learning environment, the document makes several important points.

> *Media studies cannot be taught on the assumption that the teacher's tastes are the correct tastes. ... students need an environment where they can take risks such as hearing their own voice on tape, or seeing themselves on film.* (p. 13).

The teaching and learning strategies envisaged for the ACT course involves six learning experiences. These are: (1) deconstruction (2) discussion (3) experiential learning (4) collaborative learning (5) practical activities and (6) journal recordings of experiences. The content of the course is not specified in terms of lesson plans of media activities. Instead it presents a criterion for the selection of content. The authors state that content should:

> *.be chosen to cover as wide a range of media as possible, since each of the media has its own unique conventions and influence.*
> *. relate to the abilities, interests and level of maturity of the students.*
> *. be selected to allow the students to use their imagination in performance of the learning tasks.*
> *. be selected to provide opportunities for experiential learning*
> *. follow up the previous work of the students*
> *. reflect the interaction between Media Studies and other Arts forms, and other areas of learning*
> *. be selected to increase the students' awareness of our cultural environment (p. 15)*

Unlike other curriculum documents, the ACT paper highlights the need to keep resources up-to-date; the need for the resources to reflect the students' interests and the need to expose students to a wide range of media products.

(f) Mass Media Studies in Queensland

At the time of writing her account of mass media education in Australia (1982) Geretschlaeger noted that Queensland primary schools did not offer media education to children, although children in the final year of primary school received some information about advertising.

In February 1985, the Queensland Department of Education released an annotated resources list for media studies, titled **Looking at the Media**. The resource list included a brief introduction in which it acknowledged that media courses in Queensland existed in two forms: (i) as a specific course in media; and (ii) integrated within existing subject syllabuses. The document says:

> *There is the Film and Television course studied in some schools and in others, various media-related school-developed subjects. As well, different aspects of the media are treated in Language Arts and English courses.* (p.i.)

The list of resource references, as outlined by the Media Resources Committee, was to some degree determined by the availability of texts, films and other printed materials. The intention of the Committee was to present resources so that media could be studied from three aspects: (i) learning about the media; (ii) learning through the media; and (iii) learning to use the media) but, the limited resources available led to rearranged headings of 'media in general', 'media in particular' and 'media in detail'. The Committee's decision to 'fit the course to the available material' is a somewhat unorthodox step, since it is unlikely to reflect any educational aims.

Furthermore, a brief perusal of the document indicated that of the many references cited, only four or five were listed as applicable to or suitable for infant media education. In general, this reflects the lack of information regarding mass media education for infant children, as well as the Queensland authority's low priority for media education for infants. Geretschlaeger noted in her report,

> *media studies is no priority in the case of government funding in Queensland. So there is no special staff employed for research or curriculum advice. A teacher attached to the Education Department's film library functions as screen studies councillor. The only resource materials officially offered are lists of books and films.* (p. 149).

It appears that since Geretschlaeger's report there has been little change in Queensland's commitment to media education for young children.

The Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies offers a course for senior students in Film and Television. The rationale acknowledges that children are heavy consumers of the media; that the media have the ability to 'teach'; that society is becoming increasingly 'visual'; that the media are a significant factor in socialisation; and that young people are vulnerable to the persuasion and manipulation of film and television techniques.

The aims of the course are defined as:

> *(a) to give students a basic competence in the techniques of film and/or video production;*
> *(b) to give them the vocabulary and concepts to evaluate programs they are likely to meet in their day to day viewing of television and films;*
> *(c) to give them an awareness of the part played by these media in the socialisation process - of the advantages to be gained from their use as a means of communication, and the dangers to be feared as means of repression and regimentation;*
> *(d) to show what extent reality can be recreated and in what ways it can be distorted by the media; and*
> *(e) in the long term to create a visually literate public demanding a high technical and creative level in film and television* (1987, p. 2).

The course is organized into eight topics or units each of which is divided into theoretical and practical exercises designed to meet specified core and general objectives. Examples of the theoretical exercises are: providing students with an opportunity to develop part of a script using verbal narrative and visual illustrations and discussion of the purpose of camera angles. The eight units are designed to study the following aspects of film and television:

1. fundamentals of visual narrative
2. the sound track
3. news and documentary
4. advertising
5. genre and convention

6. propaganda and ideology
7. censorship and freedom of information
8. interpretation and evaluation

The syllabus includes information on assessment of students, practical exercises (e.g. scriptwriting, camerawork, planning etc.), practical assignments (e.g. still photography) and group work; a list of resources (e.g. equipment, films, videos, magazines and in-service courses) are included.

(g) Mass Media Studies in Western Australia

According to Geretschlaeger (1982, p. 59):

> *Media studies in WESTERN AUSTRALIA is backed by a whole philosophy of man's communication as being the most significant factor in man's development. The mass media seem so important in their impact, that they should be studied in detail in a study in its own right as well as in co-operation with other subject areas. Furthermore media education should draw from several disciplines in order to explain mass media.*

In the late 1970s the Education Department of Western Australia introduced a pilot media education program in several primary schools. The prescribed media activities were integrated into the existing curricula as part of a theme and included practical activities relating to advertising, animation, photography and film developing, etc.

The 'Primedia Project', as the pilot media education program was called, was supported by in-service courses and workshops for teachers, consultants and media conventions. The pilot project operated in Grade 1 to Grade 7 classes, using a specially developed teacher's handbook outlining activities for children. Several years later the handbook was withdrawn, because it was considered to be inappropriate. No replacement handbook for infant and primary teachers has been made available, as far as the researcher is aware.

In 1988 the Western Australian Ministry of Education released a Media Studies Resource Catalogue. This document is aimed at Upper Primary and/or Secondary school teachers, although the catalogue does not indicate this point. Unlike the earlier media studies handbook for teachers, which detailed particular activities, the catalogue provides listings of media resources on subject areas such as film and television, photography and print,

radio, music, etc. The main objective of the catalogue is to refer teachers to textbooks, films, and other media resources available. The catalogue provides no course outlines or teaching ideas although it does provide an appendix containing information on how to dub (edit, or copy) from one videotape machine to another, and a step-by-step procedure for developing film.

(h) Overview of Mass Media Education in Australian Schools

Media education in Australian infant schools does not enjoy the status of subjects such as language, mathematics or physical education. In fact, in most Australian states media education in the infant school has not progressed beyond draft document stage and as such does not exist at all in the school system. In Tasmania, school-based initiatives have been undertaken from time to time, but formal media education at the infant level still appears to be a long way off. In other Australian states (South Australia and Western Australia) media curriculum documents have been produced and distributed to infant, primary and secondary schools. These documents contain ad hoc activities which do not reflect the psychological and social needs of infant children. There is little or no evidence that the findings of media research have been taken into consideration as the activities do not address the issues of public concern or the body of knowledge pertaining to the effects of the mass media. The activities are vaguely related to the media and are generally teacher initiated or directed.

This research argues that: (a) media education for infant children must be child-centred and address the needs of the children; (b) media activities must clearly relate to the children's media experiences - for example the activities should be based on current media contents; (c) media education must be based on theoretical and empirical knowledge about the effects of media on the audience; and (d) media activities must be practical/concrete experiences for infant children.

3.4 Mass Media Education: A general overseas perspective

This chapter has reported several examples of media education initiatives undertaken in the United States. Each of these examples is based on primary school media education

programs. The literature search did not reveal any similar studies that had been undertaken in the United Kingdom, but there is evidence from media textbooks that media education does exist in the United Kingdom, at least at the secondary and tertiary education level. No evidence was found to suggest that formal media education courses existed at the infant level.

In non-English speaking countries, there were few English language accounts of media education, which makes it difficult to report media education initiatives in these countries. From the readings (in Morsy, 1984) it would appear that media education in countries such as Switzerland, Finland and Japan, does not exist for infant children although there have been attempts in Finland and Austria to develop formal media education courses at the primary school level. These courses have their basis in the history of communications. In both countries, media education is integrated with other subject matter and is not treated as a subject in its own right.

In Finland the philosophy of media education was based on the perception that the school could alleviate the informational and social inequality of the literate and illiterate; that is, the school's role was to decrease the informational and cultural inequality in the home background of students by educating them to be critical users of the mass media. For example, the mass media school curriculum aimed to teach children the difference between *valuable and beneficial material and information of low aesthetic level* (Morsy, 1984, p. 223). As well, media education in Finland was designed to help children selectively avoid contents that were not beneficial from the educational viewpoint.

In terms of media education content in Finland, four broad areas were covered. These were: (a) history of communication; (b) the era of mass communications; (c) the era of mass communication in Finland; and (d) the structure of world communication. The author noted that no texts were available on the subject of media education, and that the small amount of teaching material that existed was published by newspapers and magazines. The report also indicated that such teaching materials were biased.

In contrast, media education in Austrian schools has been carried out since the early 1960s, and since 1973 media education has been obligatory in all Austrian schools. The aim of media education in Austria reflected the general aim of educational action as an emancipatory process. This is best summed up in the following statement relating to the aims of media education:

> *The aim is not to turn school children into pocket-size journalists, but to turn out men and women who, whatever their role in life, will be in a position to act in a politically responsible and democratic way and to make good use of the media in so doing. The aim corresponding to the concept of the 'principle of education' is not primarily the imparting of specialized knowledge of the media but the shaping of the child's personality. The pupil must become familiar with the various forms of social communication and practise them. He must acquire experience of the social problems of our socially organized communication system as a reality and find out how he can define his own role within it.* (Bauer in Morsy, 1984, p. 242).

Media education in Austrian schools is taught using a technical approach, using communication equipment such as video cameras and tape recorders to enable pupils to create and demystify media products.

According to the report, teacher training in media education has been a central problem in Austria - a factor that has been largely ignored or overlooked in Australia and many other countries.

SYNTHESIS

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the curriculum documents on media education outlined in this chapter. For example, formal media education is a relatively contemporary phenomenon, and as such lacks a body of empirical knowledge and a consistent and coherent theoretical framework. The curriculum documents outlined in this chapter illustrate the fragmented and often superficial nature of the courses. There has been little evidence to suggest that media education has been related to psychological and sociological theories of media effects. The latter point is of particular importance to this study, because the purpose of the research reported upon here is to help develop a theoretical foundation for media education for infant children.

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has sought to review the research literature and curriculum documents which are of relevance to this study.

In the first section, the need for a universally agreed definition of media education is highlighted. The currently used definition lacks clarity. It was revealed that the literature provided little or no help in resolving the problem.

Much of the research into the effectiveness of media education was of an experimental nature aimed at evaluating curriculum materials and teaching styles. These studies were conducted in the United States, generally with older children, and were based on the rationale that television created negative effects on its audience and that one form of media education rather than another, might successfully inoculate students against the negative effects derived from exposure to television content.

The review of literature noted the significance of matching children's developmental stages to the appropriate learning strategies, and in doing so further contributed (in the generic sense) to the development of media education theory.

The literature indicates that there has been a slow but determined effort to formalise mass media education in Australia. In particular, the literature review has highlighted the absence of a theoretical basis for media education with infant children. While ideological differences in the aims and objectives of media education are not obviously apparent among media curriculum authors, there seems to be a lack of consensus on the pedagogy and actual content of media education. Activities range from teacher-initiated discussions to child-teacher negotiated curriculum, with some states preferring to introduce media education as a subject in its own right and others preferring to integrate mass media with other subject matter. Even allowing for the fact that media education courses in Australia are still in their formative stages, there is, as yet, no research study in Australia which has comprehensively examined the perception of teachers, parents and children to factors associated with media education for infant children.

There have been no significant new trends in the development of media education in the last two decades, nor is there much evidence of an increasing awareness of theoretical or empirical knowledge about mass media's effects on children (particularly in Australia). During this period, a considerable amount of energy has been expended on formulating media-related activities for older (post-primary) school children and as a result media education in infant and primary schools in Australia is still at an embryonic stage of development. Although draft curriculum documents exist for media education in each state, few schools actually teach media education to infant or primary children on a regular basis, and there is no evidence of formal evaluation of infant mass media education programs where they exist.

In addition, there has been no attempt to survey parents, teachers or children to find out their needs in relation to media education. Each of these groups could provide valuable information regarding children's media use, which might lead to appropriate media activities for young children.

In chapter 2, it was pointed out that the 'impact mediation' model of media literacy or education might be a meaningful way to teach infant children about the media. From the current media offerings in Australia, no such model seems to be currently used. Yet for infant children in particular, the impact mediation model appears to be the most appropriate model. By using this model, schools need only concentrate on media issues that are perceived to be important (in terms of media effects research). In this way the teaching material is 'needs-based' and is kept to a minimum. The education curriculum is already heavily burdened with an enormous and ever increasing subject range. To add another subject without a valid reason would seem to be erroneous. This is another reason why research of this nature is vital at this stage.

Chapter 2 also concluded that in terms of research findings, it was likely that some form of media education was necessary for infant children. It was also pointed out that further research was necessary. The following chapter outlines how I propose to investigate the questions that have been drawn from the initial research question and the literature review.

Chapter 4

Theoretical Framework

No theory is good except on condition that one uses it to go beyond
Andre Gide (1869-1951)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the framework of the study reported in this thesis, and identify the propositions to be examined.

This chapter begins with a review of the purpose of this study; this is followed by a statement of the research problems to be examined, which were identified from the literature review in chapters 2 and 3, which in turn leads on to an examination of the selection of appropriate methodological procedures chosen for this study. The appropriateness of the methodological procedures chosen is discussed in terms of previous research of a similar nature and also in relation to methodology literature generally.

This chapter has been organized into six sections, which are as follows:

1. Purpose of the study
2. Research questions arising from the literature review
3. The research framework
    - 3.1 The importance of a mixed methodology
        - 3.1.1 The rationale for using a questionnaire
        - 3.1.2 The rationale for using child interviews

3.1.3 The rationale for using child observations
3.1.4 The rationale for using a case study
3.1.5 Drawing the mixed methodology together

4. Propositions to be tested

(i) Part A of the study:

SECTION A: Propositions relating to children's time spent with the media
SECTION B: Propositions relating to children's media-induced fear arousal
SECTION C: Propositions relating to children's imitative use of the media
SECTION D: Propositions relating to children's understanding of the media
SECTION E: Propositions relating to teachers', parents' and children's personal opinions regarding the negative effects of the mass media
SECTION F: Propositions relating to parents and teachers' perception of the need for media education

(ii) Part B of the study

SECTION G: Proposition relating to media education curriculum

5. Conclusion

6. Summary

1. Purpose of the study

The general purpose of Part A of the study was to investigate the need for media education for infant school children. In chapter 2 evidence was presented that supported the need for media education based on the impact mediation model. As well, the literature review also identified several unanswered questions about the effects of the media on young children. The need for research within an Australian context was perceived to be important, because such information is vital to the foundation of media education activities for Australian school children. In chapter 3, media education in Australia was reviewed. There was evidence to suggest that the activities were fragmented and superficial, and lacking any theoretical basis. Experimental research studies were examined which provided valuable information regarding particular models of media education. Evidence suggested that an impact mediation model might be more appropriate for younger children. Television literacy research had been undertaken in the United States by Singer, Zuckerman and Singer with young children with promising results. It was envisaged that media

education in Australia might be able to use some of the ideas used by Singer and colleagues if there was evidence that Australian children were affected by the media. It is to be remembered that Singer et. al's study was based on television, and not media generally.

2. Research questions arising from the literature review

In chapter 2 three concepts relating to infant children's media use were identified as the focus areas of this research. These areas were: (a) children's understanding of the media; (b) children's media-influenced imitative behaviour; and (c) children's emotional responses to the media. In general terms, the paucity of research regarding the media's effect on four to eight year old children was highlighted. It was noted that research into mass media's effects on infant children had been neglected in Australia and that there was an urgent need for co-ordinated research (Senate Standing Committee, 1978, p. 154). Since the inception of television, media effects research has been almost exclusively devoted to the area of television-induced effects. Comparative research about the effects of other media has been virtually ignored in recent years with the most significant study being that of Schramm, Lyle and Parker in 1961. The relevance of this study - being 30 years old - has been questioned. Therefore, it was decided that this research should focus on the effects of a range of media (television, video, cinema, storybooks, audio cassette stories, and live dramatic performances) on infant children in order to determine which areas should be the focus for media education.

In chapter 2 specific research questions were identified in terms of each area of the research. These will now be discussed under their appropriate headings.

(a) Children's understanding of the media:

In terms of media effects research, there was obvious concern about children's understanding of television reality and fantasy. Cupit (1980) and Greenfield (1984) indicated that young children find it difficult to differentiate between fantasy and reality; and Dorr (1983) suggested that infant (kindergarten to grade 2, as well as older children) children use genre cues, characters, time settings, etc. to determine which television content is pretend. It is therefore suggested that if young American children are able to use such information to help them differentiate between media fact and fantasy, then it should also be true that the use of genre, characters, events, settings, etc. might act as an appropriate aid for examining Australian infant children's perceptions of reality and fantasy. For example, children could be presented with a broad range of images from different film genre,

characters, settings, etc. and asked to identify whether the images are of real people or events or pretend people and situations. This is very different from the work of Dorr, in that it simply uses her findings as the basis for selection of fantasy and reality images for experimental purposes.

In addition to utilising Dorr's ideas about the way in which children identify reality and fantasy from particular images, a classification system was developed to make the distinction between representations of reality in the media. These levels illustrate the relationship of children in the real world to media representations of reality, and act as a framework for understanding and discussing media images in relation to infant children. For the purpose of this research media images have been assigned four distinct levels of reality within which sub-stages exist. The following levels of representations of reality illustrate the relationship of children in the real world to media representations of reality:

Level 1 is typified by news reports, documentary and current affair presentations where an endeavour is made to represent real world events as they happen.

Level 2 is typified by drama series, such as **A Country Practice**, that reflect situations which are typical of or similar to real life experiences.

Level 3 is typified by drama stories that depict real people in unreal settings with unreal creatures or life forms such as in **Dr. Who, The Never Ending Story** or **Caravan of Courage**. Stories such as these weave a patchwork of reality and fantasy.

Level 4 is the level most remote from reality. Characters and locations often bear no relationship to the real world. They include cartoon or animated stories, in which animals talk like humans (e.g. **101 Dalmatians, Dot and the Koala**), and characters have superhuman qualities.

The illustration below indicates the relationship of the child in his real world and his exposure to the mass media. The child of four to eight years tends to spend his mass media time immersed in Levels 3 and 4 - those areas furthest removed from the real world. His storybooks, cassette tapes, videos, and television favourites delve into the magical and the unreal, far removed from his everyday experiences.

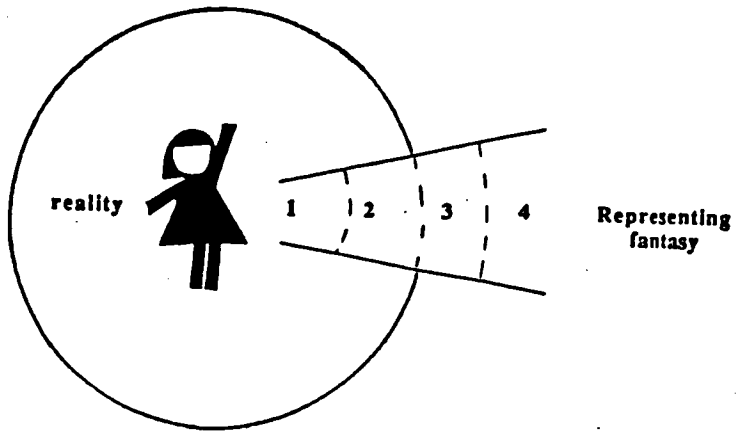


FIGURE 4.1: The child and his/her relationship to mass media levels of reality and fantasy

Dorr has pointed out that it is not until children reach the age of eight years that they begin to accept the fantasy nature of television programs. This research will provide information about four-to-eight year old children's understanding of television and video contents in an attempt to identify which elements of television content children equate with reality.

In addition to examining children's perceptions of television reality and fantasy, a general question regarding children's inquisitiveness about media processes and content should provide data about which of the media are likely to stimulate the most questions. As mentioned earlier, most of the research has concentrated on children's involvement with television. This research extends previous research by attempting to compare children's involvement with a range of media.

(b) Children's imitation of the media:

The literature review suggested that children imitate the behaviour of many different models including those from television. The imitation of aggressive behaviour was identified as a major concern of media effects researchers and is therefore of considerable interest to any study about an impact mediation model of media education. There was no research material available about children's imitation of other media models and therefore this research aims to extend previous research by finding out whether infant children use other media as a source of their imitative play.

This thesis suggests that children may also imitate the behaviour of other media models. Previous research has concentrated on children's imitation of television characters behaviour, but it was noted by Yu (1974) that through socialization children are influenced by a wide range of direct and indirect experiences. Therefore it could be assumed that children imitate all of the other media - as well as television - and such imitation may be a cause of concern. Further research is required to determine whether children imitate other media, and whether such imitative behaviour is negative or positive.

If the research finds that Australian children imitate all forms of media then it could be argued that educational activities about the dangers of imitating media models should cover all forms of media. On the other hand, if children are far more likely to imitate television than other media, then perhaps media education should focus on the effects of that media only.

The research studies identified in chapter 2 (Lovaas, 1961; Bandura, ross and Ross, 1963; Eron, 1982; etc.) suggested that children imitate both fantasy and realistic characters on television, which led to a further question being posed. That is: are infant children more likely to imitate a media model's behaviour if they perceive the model to be realistic? We already know that children imitate both fantastic and realistic behaviour of television models, but more research is needed to determine whether infant children are more likely to imitate a realistic media model than a fantasy media model. This research attempts to answer this question. The implication of this relates to the extent and nature of media education required about fantasy and realistic characters in the media.

It is envisaged that children, parents and teachers could be presented with questions relating to children's imitative use of various media, allowing space to record examples of behaviour that could be classified as positive or negative at a later stage of analysis.

Although previous research provides valuable information about children's imitative use of television, this study would extend previous research because it intends to examine children's general imitative behaviour in relation to a wide range of media.

(c) Children's media-induced fears:

The literature review suggested that there was evidence that cinema, radio and television had the potential to frighten audiences. Recent studies by Cantor and Sparks (1984) found

that television and films were more likely to frighten children than other media; younger children were more likely to be frightened of fantasy content than older children; and older children were more likely to be frightened of content that could happen in real life than younger children. Apart from the minor 1984 study, none of the research looked at children's fear reactions to a wider range of media and this research attempts to address this oversight.

Furthermore, none of the research looked at the intensity of children's fears in relation to television and video, even though there was evidence (Cupit, 1986) to suggest that children were suffering varying degrees of fear as a result of watching unsuitable video material. The value of this information in the context of the present study, relates to the possible need to vary media education about fear for different age groups, school groups, etc. For example, Lagerspetz, et. al. (1978) found that emotional involvement in a film was associated with gender, social class and type of day-care centre. If girls react more intensely to frightening media information - perhaps there is a need to consider different media education programs, particularly at single sex schools.

A further question that needs answering in an Australian context is: what are infant children's media fears? The work of Cantor and his colleagues provides a good basis for research in this area. Do Australian infant children (five to seven years of age) find a character's appearance more frightening than events that could occur in the real world? It would be possible to test this proposition by presenting children with photographs of a range of images (characters and events) and asking them to indicate how frightened each image would make them feel if they saw it on television. This questioning could be validated by questions to parents about how their child reacts to such images.

For this part of the research Cantor's research findings as well as teacher and children's responses to an earlier pilot study, served as a starting point for the selection of pictorial images to be used in the interview with children. A range of images was classified according to their potential to cause fear in children. These ranged from non-violent images such as a frightening face of a cartoon witch to images involving extreme violence or aggression. As one of the aims of this research was to determine precisely what type of televised events frighten children it was necessary to develop a sub-set of potentially frightening images. Therefore an additional aim of this research was to find out whether children were more frightened of one particular technique over another technique. In other words, do children find an attempted suicide as frightening as hand-to-hand fighting using

a weapon? Ethical considerations were of concern and the following chapter discusses these issues.

A description of the potentially frightening images as used in this research, follows:

4.1 Physical aggression/violence involving more than one person. For example, hand to hand fighting with or without a weapon resulting in visible injuries or death.

4.2 Physical aggression/violence involving one person. For example, suicide or attempted suicide with or without a weapon (e.g. tablets, guns, hanging, jumping from a high building, cliff or bridge) resulting in visible injuries or death.

4.3 Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal. For example, a provoked or non-provoked attack resulting in visible injury or death to the person.

4.4 Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal. For example, a provoked or non-provoked attack resulting in visible injury or death to the animal.

4.5 Impending danger of an accident. For example, an impending accident involving a plane, car, ship, bike etc.

4.6 After effects of an accident. For example, an accident scene involving a plane, car, ship, bike etc. resulting in visible wreckage, injury and/ or death.

4.7 Destruction of objects through remote aggression and violence. For example, the visible destruction of property through bombing, fire etc.

4.8 Destruction of objects through physical human aggression and violence. For example, the visible destruction of property (i.e. breaking furniture, smashing crockery or glass) through human physical force.

4.9 Destruction of objects through natural causes (flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane). For example, the visible destruction of property as a result of a natural disaster.

4.10 Directed verbal aggression. For example, shouting, arguing, screaming, abusing, cursing involving one or more persons.

4.11 Non-violent images: Appearance of character. For example, the appearance of characters who have human characteristics or are based on the image of human beings e.g. witches, ghosts, goblins, etc.

4.12 Non-violent images: Appearance of character. For example, the appearance of characters who have animal or non-human characteristics e.g. E.T. Daleks on **Dr. Who**, creatures in **The Never Ending Story**, etc.

4.13 Non-violent images: Appearance of character. For example, the appearance of characters who have the ability to 'transform' from one state to another - from person to animal, from object to person etc. (e.g. **Transformers, The Red and The Blue, Gumby)**

4.14 Non-violent images. For example, an event such as the abandonment of a child or animal.

The concept of fear-evoking images, as used in this study, refers to any behaviour or action that is capable of frightening an individual. The fear-evoking image may or may not be intentional. It may be graphic or implied, and it may or may not be violent.

This area of the research extends the previous work of Cantor and colleagues in that it seeks not only to identify fear-evoking stimuli - but also seeks to identify children's levels of fears based on a four-point Likert-type rating scale. The rating scale was derived from the model of fear as outlined below. In the light of no appropriate model of fear that explained how media users react to stimuli, the following model was formulated based on research findings presented in the literature review.

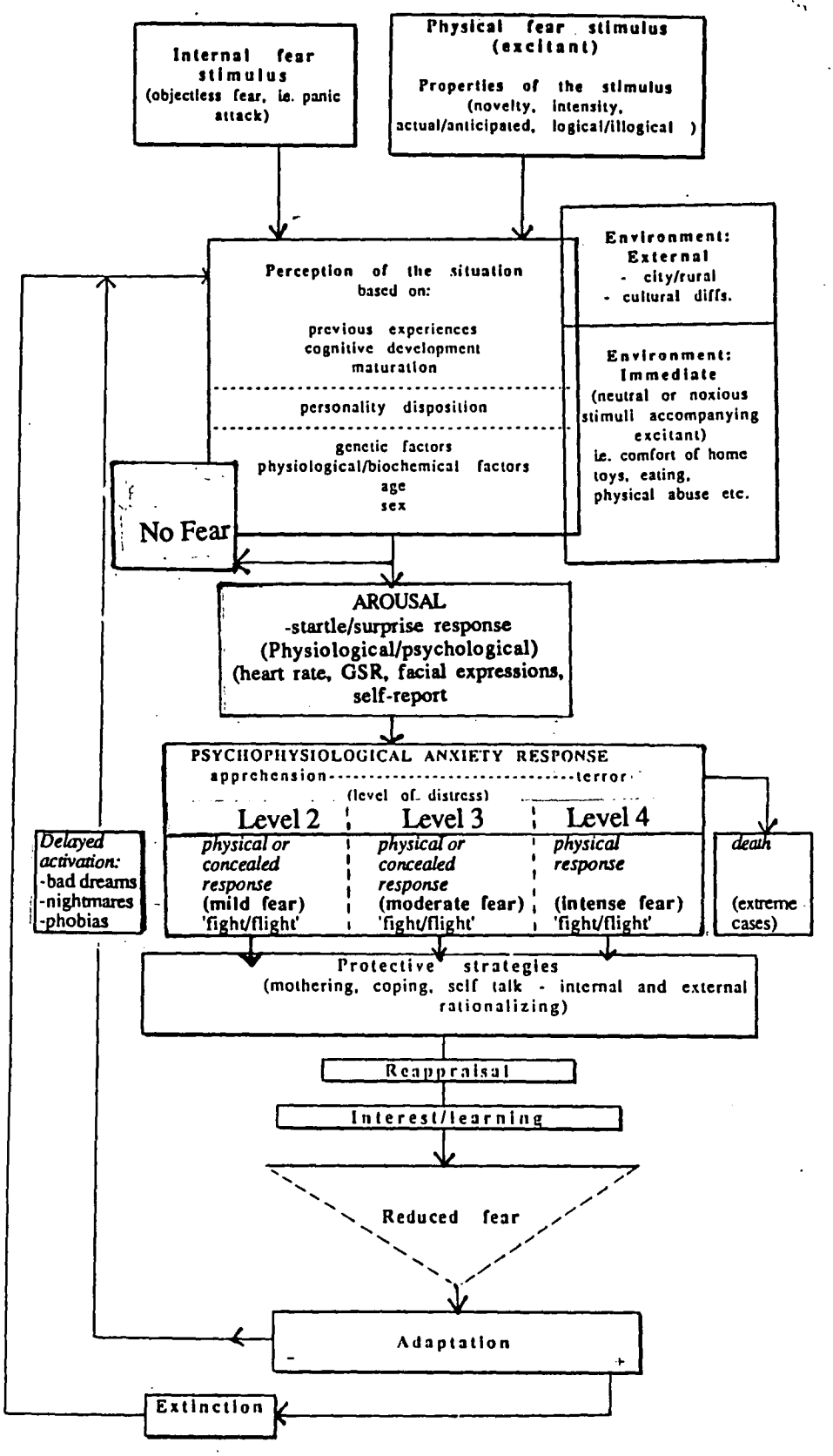


FIGURE 4.2: A Psychological model of fear.

As illustrated in Figure 4.2 the fear stimulus or excitant may be physical in nature having properties of novelty, intensity and actuality, or be anticipatory. For example, the fear stimulus might be the physical appearance or anticipated appearance of a snake or the observation of a frightening character on television. Apart from fear stimuli external to the individual, an internal or self-originating fear stimulus may trigger a panic attack. As this aspect of fear is not related to this study it will not be discussed further.

The perception of the situation is based on a wide range of psychological, physiological and environmental factors. For example, there is evidence to suggest that fear may be extinguished or reduced through pairing the fear stimulus with a neutral or pleasant stimuli (Marks, 1969, and Cantor and Wilson, 1988).

The cultural environment and the geographic environment are likely to influence the individual's susceptibility to various type of fear stimulus (Agras, 1985) and similarly the familiarity or novelty of the stimulus, may influence individuals' perception of the fear stimulus according to Cantor and Sparks (1984).

Evidence suggests that age, sex and personality variables may be related to individual susceptibility to fear (Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin, 1978; Agras, 1985; Chavez, Hamilton and Keilin, 1986, p. 722; Sparks, 1986; Angelino and Shedd, 1953; Chan, 1977; and Cantor, Wilson and Hoffner, 1986).

Thus, evidence suggests that individuals react and respond to fear sources or stimuli differently, according to internal and external variables, and the level or intensity of arousal is similarly unique. The model of fear as presented, identifies four levels of distress (excluding the 'no fear' category). These levels are: *mild fear*, which may be physical (visible signs of fear such as hiding eyes behind hands, reporting fear to an adult) or concealed (internally experienced, without visible expression and not verbally reported); *moderate fear*, which would manifest itself in physical expressions of fear (e.g. crying, avoidance behaviour, reporting fear to another person) or concealed response (internally experienced without visible physical expression); *intense fear*, which would be expressed physically (e.g. screaming or crying in a distressed manner, seeking the comfort and support of another person; vomit, avoidance behaviour); and *death* - this is extremely rare.

The fear response (mild fear, moderate fear or intense fear) triggers a range of protective coping strategies aimed at reducing and extinguishing the fear through fight/flight

responses and internal cognitive rationalization. The range and selection of protective strategies to reduce fear is based on personality and situational factors. 'Flight' or avoidance behaviour as a protective strategy is not generally considered to be an appropriate means of extinguishing fear because of its possible relationship to more serious phobias (Agras, 1985, pp. 34-35). But it will be argued that flight from fear induced by vicarious exposure to an object (e.g. violence on television) might be a rational approach towards extinguishing such fear.

The model shows that the reduction of the state of fear as a result of the protective coping strategies, and the reappraisal and learning that ensue, result in the positive or negative adaptation of the individual. Positive adaptation and reappraisal of the experience leads to extinction of fear and the subsequent 'filing' away of the experience with previous experiences. On the other hand, negative adaptation of the fear experience may lead to delayed activation of effects such as bad dreams, nightmares and phobias. In respect to children's exposure to frightening television contents concern has been expressed regarding the potentially harmful effect that such images may have on young children (Garner, 1986). This model illustrates the processes involved when an individual encounters a potentially frightening media image and is used to explain the factors associated with arousal and the levels of fear as used in this thesis.

For this part of the research, observational assessment was also deemed to be a valuable tool in gathering data. It was therefore envisaged that a small group of children would be observed in their own home while watching their regular diet of television; and while watching a potentially frightening children's video. This would of course be carried out under parental supervision and with parental permission. It was also decided that this part of the research would be best left as long as possible and only after the researcher had worked with the children in their classroom so as to avoid additional stress of a stranger observing them.

In terms of the impact mediation model of television literacy, it is envisaged that research about children's media-induced fears could be used to develop curriculum that takes into account the degree of fears children experience and the focus of activities for such education. If there is evidence that children are being extremely frightened by images (e.g. Level 3 fears), then there is obviously a case for taking steps to ensure that they are: (a) not exposed to such images; and/or (b) educated about the fantasy nature of such images in an attempt to reduce their level of fear. At this stage there is little evidence to suggest that it is possible to reduce children's media fears, however evidence was presented in chapter 2 that

sugggested that children's fears about surgery could be reduced through education (Greenfield, 1984). A further study evaluating media activities aimed at reducing children's media induced fears would be necessary to conclusively say anything about the effects of educational fear reduction techniques.

Parents, teachers and children could be asked personal opinions regarding the negative effects of the mass media. The value of these questions could be twofold: (1) Answers to these questions would provide an insight into community attitudes regarding media's effects or potential effects; and (2) the questions would provide children in the study with a 'lighter' end to the questionnaire, and as such leave them with more pleasant memories to return to their classroom.

Research questions arising from the review of media education

In chapter 3 it was stated that there was a need to involve parents and classroom teachers in decisions about media education. It was also acknowledged that research into media's effects - particularly in relation to the Australian context - was imperative for an impact mediation model of media education. The current media education courses for infant children in Australia do not reflect the research issues or effects mediation model. Infant media activities appear to be based on some ideas about media literacy, but by and large these ideas are not consistent.

In terms of infant children, it was suggested that the impact mediation model of media literacy might prove more appropriate than what is currently offered. But in order to decide whether this is a viable proposition further research is required. We need to know what effect media has on Australian children; what parents and teachers perceive to be important content in media education curriculum; who should be responsible for media education; and what, if any media education already exists in the classroom, and what form it takes. This research attempts to answer these questions in order to determine whether parents and teachers perceive media education to be necessary.

The input of parents and teachers is an important aspect of this research because it is something that appears to have been overlooked in Australia and elsewhere. With the exception of *television* literacy work such as that by Singer and colleagues, there has been little effort to include parents in the curriculum process.

Knowledge about infant teachers skills and confidence in teaching about the media, would seem to be a question of considerable importance, and one that could be responsible for the overall success or failure of any teaching program in this area. If teachers lack skills and confidence in this area, then there may be a need for teacher training.

3. The research framework

This research seeks to examine several issues about media's effects on infant children. Because of the age of the children concerned in this study and the issues to be investigated, it was envisaged that a mixed or multi-methodology was necessary. There were several reasons for this decision.

Firstly, a mixed methodology (questionnaire, interview, observation and case-study) permits the examination of issues at the subjective and objective level, providing a comprehensive and reliable account of the situation. Secondly, a mixed methodology allows the possibility of a rich and more accurate reflection of infant children's use and perceptions of the media, from a variety of perspectives (parents, teachers and children). Thirdly, it has been noted by Williams, Rice and Rogers (1988) that multiple methods of data collection and analysis may eliminate weaknesses of any single method of data collection and analysis. Finally, mixed methodology was chosen for another practical reason - infant children have limited reading and writing skills and therefore cannot complete a written questionnaire, which necessitates the use of alternative methodology. A more serious issue was highlighted by Knowles and Nixon (1989) when they suggested that parental reports of children's emotional understanding and reactions to television viewing may be dissonant with children's own perceptions; similarly one might assume that the teacher's perception may also be dissonant with the children's perception. All of this further suggests that mixed methodology was necessary in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation from various perspectives.

3.1 The rationale for using a questionnaire

A questionnaire was considered to be the most appropriate research tool with which to investigate parent and teacher responses regarding the perceived need for media education for infant children because of its ability to generate formally a large amount of information in a relatively short time frame. Furthermore, questionnaires are individualistic and static; that is, they are generally addressed to one person and completed by one person. They do not *encourage people to meet, discuss, argue and resolve conflict ... they give a snapshot*

picture of the participant's response at the moment of questionnaire completion (Wadsworth, 1984, p. 34). Thirdly, questionnaire information is amenable to statistical treatment (Galtung, 1967).

On the negative side, Wadsworth (1984, p. 33) notes that the questionnaire might not permit the researcher to check out the nuance of a response, or provide access to supplementary information; and Goode and Hatt (1952, p. 166) indicate that almost all questionnaires deal in part with the past, and in that respect, rely on respondents' memory for accurate details. In response to these two issues, in the current research each questionnaire provided sufficient information to enable the researcher to contact the respondent, should it be necessary; and secondly, the research conducted not only asks about the past but also asks parents to make judgements about the present and the future, based on their knowledge at the time.

The survey or questionnaire method has been widely used in media research over the years (for example, Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 1961; Abelman, 1982; Holman and Braithwaite, 1982; Cantor and Sparks, 1984). On some occasions, however, the questionnaire method has been used to overcome problems, rather than because of its applicability to the research question e.g. Cantor and Sparks (1984, p. 92). While the present study does not justify using parental or teacher questionnaires as a basis for finding out what children think, it does acknowledge the importance of other people's perceptions, particularly in relation to children's media imitative behaviour, because it is quite feasible that children unconsciously imitate the media and therefore may not be aware of the extent to which they imitate media messages.

The following chapter (Design, Method and Procedures) discusses questionnaire construction, including validity and reliability of the chosen instrument.

3.2 The rationale for using child interviews

In relation to infant children's time spent with the media, imitative use of the media, understanding of media reality and non-reality and their emotional responses in relation to the media, it was thought that parental and teacher responses could be obtained through a questionnaire. But because of the age of the children, a questionnaire was not considered to be an appropriate or reliable way to collect children's responses. It was implied earlier (Knowles and Nixon, 1989; Cantor and Sparks, 1984), that adult responses to questions

relating to children may not be accurate. For example, Knowles and Nixon suggested that adults attribute their own emotional understanding and reactions to children watching television, indicating that there may be considerable differences between what the parents perceive the child to be frightened of and what actually frightens the child. Therefore an interview method was chosen, using an interview schedule that had been based on parental and teacher questionnaires. In addition to the questions, children were also provided with photographic and video examples to assist with questionnaire clarification. This technique was considered to be the most appropriate methodology to investigate children's perceptions of what they think frightens them, the degree to which they are frightened, etc.

Wilson, Hoffner and Cantor's (1987) research into children's perceptions of the effectiveness of techniques to reduce fear from mass media was of particular interest to the present study, in that the authors interviewed three-to-ten year old children, using pictorial representations as the basis for discussions. In their study, children were interviewed individually in a quiet room at the children's own school, and were shown a series of pictures depicting cartoon illustrations of cognitive and non-cognitive coping strategies that might help children cope with frightening television contents. The children were asked to indicate the coping strategy that might make them feel better if they were watching something frightening on television. Their study indicated that children had no difficulty understanding the illustrations, although they found that younger children exhibited a 'yea-saying' tendency when asked whether or not a strategy might help reduce fear. With this in mind, in the second experiment the researchers showed the pictures in pairs and asked children to select the most effective strategy from the pair of alternatives. The present study employed a similar strategy, in that children were shown actual photographs taken from the television screen or video-taped extracts and then asked whether an event such as that might frighten them if they saw it on television. Similarly another part of the questionnaire asked children about the reality of television events using photographic examples. An earlier pilot study indicated that children did not develop the 'yea-saying' tendency previously noted by Wilson, Hoffner and Cantor.

In relation to interviewing techniques, Wadsworth (1984, p. 32) noted that group interviews should be confined to 10 subjects or less. She identifies as an attribute of group interviewing the subjects' ability to gain more meaningful understandings of concepts, by being able to check meanings with others in the group. However in the case of this research, infant children's imitative behaviour was acknowledged and, therefore, children were interviewed in groups of two, three, or individually in order to help children avoid imitating the responses of their peers. Furthermore, children were interviewed in mixed

age groups, with the youngest child always being asked the question first, as an attempt to reduce the chances of imitating other children's responses, and to reduce peer pressure to imitate responses. Group interviews were also adopted for practical reasons, as it was ascertained during the pilot study that some of the younger children were shy or possibly frightened by the questions. The interview situation enabled the researcher to give children pictorial examples of questions asked, as well as providing them with elaborations, definitions, etc. if so required.

Simon (1969, p. 92) noted that even if the interviewer is unbiased, the interviewee may be affected by him; therefore every care was taken to convey the questions in the same manner to all children.

3.3 The rationale for using child-observations

As previously mentioned (chapter 2) many variables have been used as indicators of fear in experimental research situations, in an attempt to measure the amount of fear or anxiety induced by the mass media. Cantor and Sparks (1984) and Cantor, Wilson and Hoffner (1986) have used parental perceptions of children's fears as an indicator of children's fear of media contents. Langham and Stewart, (1981); Sparks, (1986); and Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin, (1978) have used children's self-reports of fear; and Cohen and Adoni, (1980) have used videotaped observations of children's facial expressions; and Averill, Olbrich and Lazarus (1972); Wilson and Cantor, (1985); and Bjorkqvist, (1985) have used physiological variables, for instance heart rate or skin resistance. In some experimental situations (e.g. Bjorkqvist, Wilson and Cantor, and Lagerspetz, et. al.) a mixed methodology enabled the researchers to examine the degree to which variables correspond or correlate. Wilson (1987) and Cantor and Wilson (1988) indicated that there was a correspondence between facial expressions and self-reports of fear, and similarly, Bjorkqvist (1985) found that there was a positive correlation between verbal expressions of anxiety, facial expressions of fear and vasoconstriction responses - photopletysmographic recordings of finger pulse volume, measuring vasoconstrictions in the finger - and skin potential responses.

The present study initially intended to measure changes in heart rate of children watching television and video contents, but the recording equipment proved unreliable and this plan was therefore abandoned. However, as a result of the success of previous research,

children's self-reports of fear and videotaped facial expressions of responses whilst viewing television and video, were included as measures of children's fear. In addition the researcher took notes of children's comments, movements, etc. because at times children moved out of camera range.

It was also important to keep the home environment as near to the normal viewing condition as possible. With this in mind, the researcher took on a role of complete observer, a term adopted by Morison (1986) to describe the role of the researcher when he observes - or rather disappears into - the environment, so as to avoid observer effects, as suggested by Simon (1969, p. 91). Simon acknowledges that the observer cannot help influencing the environment, simply because he is part of the environment. In the case of this research, the video camera also became part of the environment. However it should be pointed out that the children were familiar with both the researcher and the video camera, as the media education component of the research had been carried out with the children prior to the child-observation stage of the study. The research was conducted in this sequence because it gave the children the opportunity to get to know the researcher and feel comfortable about the presence of video equipment.

The major purpose of the child observation component of this research was to observe children's emotional (fear) reactions to the media (television and video) in their own home environment. Unlike earlier experimental studies that were criticised for investigating children's fear responses to television in a laboratory situation (e.g. Hartnagel, Teevan and McIntyre, (1975); Bjorkqvist (1985) etc.) the present investigation aimed to take advantage of the safety and security of the home environment to obtain a realistic perception of how children react to the media in their own home, with parents and siblings present. This is similar to an approach used by Palmer (1986) and her study will provide a valuable background for this research. For ethical reasons, the home environment also proved to be an important place to be if the children became frightened by media contents - the videos were chosen because of their potential to frighten children of four-to-eight years of age.

3.4 The rationale for using a case study

A case-study approach was thought to be suitable for the evaluation of the media education pilot study. According to Simon (1969, p. 276) the case study is an appropriate method of descriptive research when the researcher is attempting to get a detailed picture of a situation, and as such is particularly appropriate when used as a preliminary investigation for future research. The purpose of this case study was not to provide an all-inclusive evaluation of

the curriculum, but instead to develop a detailed and hopefully deeper understanding of how media education was received in two schools over a five-week period. The case study approach which was adopted used observation and questionnaire techniques to highlight the processes and changes that occurred as a result of media education. It should be noted, however, that this aspect of the study was a 'pilot' project, and as such was designed to highlight areas for future research.

3.5 Drawing the mixed methodology together

In effect, all three groups (parents, teachers and children) were asked similar questions, except that parents and teachers were asked additional questions about media education that were not asked of the children. Figure 4.3 below illustrates the triangular method of obtaining and cross-checking data, as used in this study.

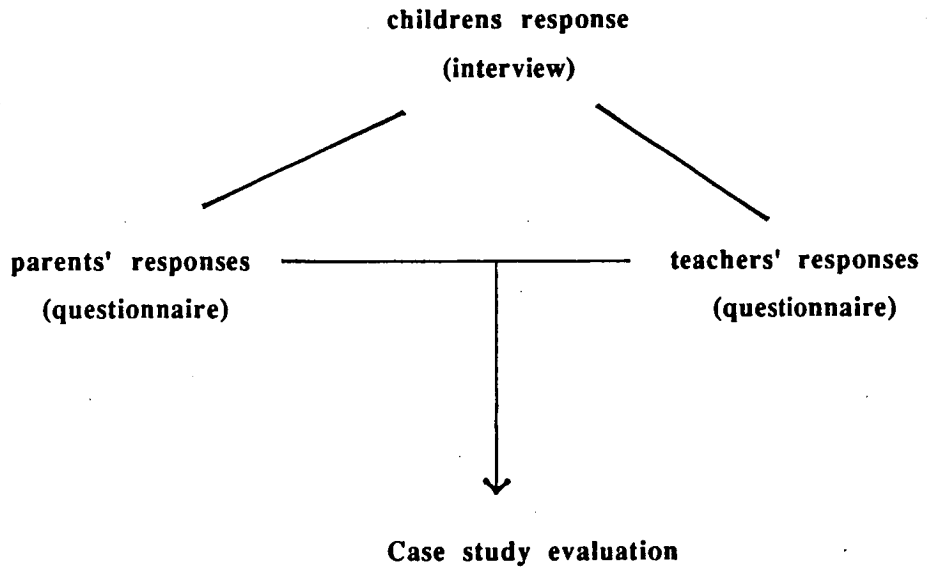


FIGURE 4.3: The triangulation research method used to relate parents', teachers' and children's responses to questions regarding the need and basis for media education.

In relation to children's fear arousal as a result of exposure to media contents, Figure 4.4 illustrates the triangular research design (questionnaires, interviews and child-observations) which was used in this part of the research. In relation to this study, the triangulation

approach was adopted as a means of strengthening the reliability of the research data. The advantages of the triangulation method of data collection and analysis, as used in this study, are based on (a) the illuminative nature of the child observation technique, allowing critical appraisal of incidents, processes and interactions within the child's normal home environment; (b) the questionnaire component of the methodology allowed assessment of parental perceptions about children's fear responses to the media; and (c) the interviews allowed comparative assessment of parental perceptions and children's perceptions of what frightens them and to what degree events frighten them.

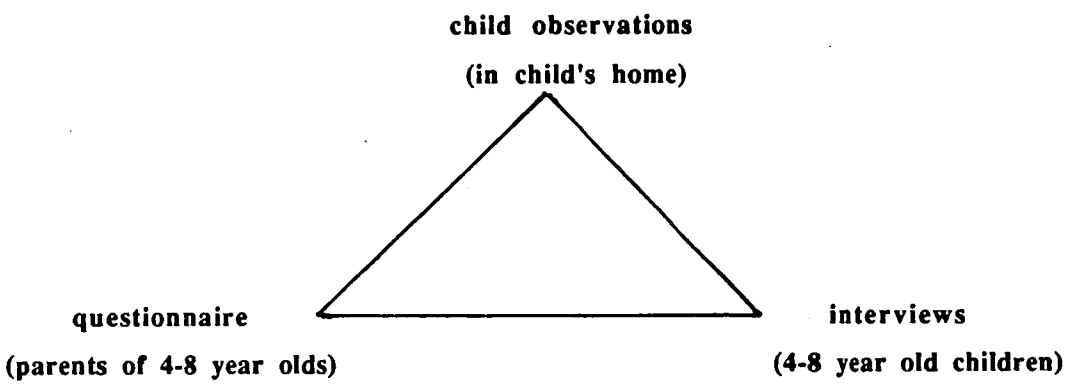


Figure 4.4: Research design for gathering data regarding children's fear arousal to media contents.

In conclusion, the above framework was considered appropriate to the aims and objectives of this study because (a) the methodology took into consideration the need to compare parental and teacher perceptions about children's media relationships, by cross-referencing parental and teacher data with children's own responses; and (b) the methodology recognized the value of using both subjective and objective methods of data collection.

4. Propositions to be tested

The propositions to be examined are divided into six categories. **Section A** refers to propositions to be tested regarding children's television and video viewing habits; **section B** refers to propositions to be tested regarding children's emotional arousal (fear) in relation to a variety of entertainment media, including parents' and children's subjective

interpretation of the intensity of such fear following exposure to a frightening, upsetting, or distressing image. **Section C** presents propositions relevant to children's imitative use of television and other media, as indicated by parents, teachers and children. **Section D** outlines propositions relating to children's ability to interpret (clarify or explain the meaning of), judge and make decisions about media processes and/or content, based on teachers', parents' and children's perceptions. **Section E** refers to propositions relating to children's, parents', and teachers' personal opinions regarding media's effects on children and **Section F** outlines propositions relating to teachers' and parents' perception of the need for media education for infant children.

The propositions are derived from material presented in the literature review. Some of the propositions intend to check the validity of previous overseas research in an Australian context, and other propositions intend to compare previous studies conducted with older children with younger children in this study. In addition, some propositions intend to extend previous research that was conducted in a limited way. Where appropriate, references are included which relate to previous studies that are relevant to the proposition.

SECTION A: Propositions relating to children's time spent with the media

It is proposed that:

1.1 *The key variables which influence children's amount of time spent with the media are availability, school background and age.* (Williams, 1986; Tindall, Reid and Goodwin, 1977; Holman (1980) and Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, 1978).

SECTION B: Propositions relating to children's media-induced fear arousal

It is proposed that:

2.1 *Most forms of entertainment have the ability to frighten an infant child; however, it is envisaged that television, video and movie contents will frighten children more than audio cassette stories, books, and live drama.* (Cupit, 1987; Greenfield, 1984).

2.2 *The key variables which influence whether children report fear arousal as a result of exposure to the media are: age, gender, and social background as determined by school type* (Jersild and Holmes, 1935; Rachman, 1974; Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin, 1978, Agras, 1985; Chavez, Hamilton and Keilin, 1986; Sparks, 1986; Cantor, Wilson and Hoffner, 1986).

2.3 *The key variables which influence the intensity of fear experienced by children as a result of exposure to television or video, are: the nature of the televised material and gender* (Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince, 1958; Australian Broadcasting Control Board, 1972; Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin, 1978; Cantor and Sparks, 1984).

2.4 *The key variables which influence media induced bad dreams are gender and age* (Cupit, 1986).

2.5 *The key variables which influence children's preference for viewing frightening content on television are age, gender and school background.*

SECTION C: Propositions regarding children's imitative use of television and other entertainment media

It is proposed that:

3.1 *Most infant children will imitate media models; however it is envisaged that television, video and cinema images will be a greater source of imitation than other media images* (Schramm, Lyle and Parker, 1961; Lovaas, 1961; Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1963; Friedrich and Stein, 1973; Liebert, Davidson and Neale, 1977; Singer and Singer 1979).

3.2 *The key variables which influence whether children imitate the media are age and the children's ability to differentiate between media fantasy and reality* (Eron, 1982).

SECTION D: Propositions regarding children's ability to interpret (clarify or explain the meaning of), judge and make decisions about the media processes and/or content

It is proposed that:

4.1 *Children do not understand the media and are curious and inquisitive about the contents and processes of the media, however it is anticipated that television will be a greater source of curiosity for infant children than any of the other forms of media* (Greenfield, 1984; Cupit, 1987; and Knowles and Nixon, 1989).

4.2 *The majority of Australian infant children are not able to discriminate between the media's representations of reality and fantasy* (Greenfield, 1984).

4.3 *The key variable which influences whether children understand or differentiate between reality and fantasy in television and video is age* (Greenfield, 1984, Cupit, 1980; Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin, 1978; Sparks, 1986; Wilson and Cantor, 1985).

SECTION E: Propositions regarding teachers', parents', and children's personal opinions regarding the negative effects of mass media on society

It is proposed that:

5.1 *Most teachers and parents perceive the level of violence on television to be related to negative behaviour of children, and the general level of violence in the community.*

5.2 *Most teachers and parents believe that criminally minded people might use information from a television program or video to plan or commit a crime.*

5.3 *The key variable which influences children's desire to view television and video violence is related to gender and school differences.*

SECTION F: Propositions regarding parents' and teachers' perceptions of the need for media education for infants

It is proposed that:

6.1 *Parents and teachers perceive a need for media education for infant children* (Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, 1978; and Canavan, 1975).

6.2 *Parents and teachers perceive that media education should be the joint responsibility of home and school.*

6.3 *Infant teachers do not perceive they have sufficient skills to teach media education because there is insufficient training available to them in this area* (Schaeffer, in Morsy, 1984; Geretschlaeger, 1982).

6.4 *Parents and teachers are able to identify certain factors that might provide a basis for media education activities with infant children.*

6.5 *Parents and teachers perceive media education to involve all areas of mass media.*

SECTION G: Proposition relating to media education curriculum

7.1 *It is proposed that media education can provide children with experiences that help them understand the media.*

Summary

This chapter developed a theoretical framework for the study, based on (a) the insights presented in the literature review (Chapters 2 and 3), and (b) the uniqueness of the research situation reported in this thesis. A mixed methodology was devised for the present study, involving questionnaire, interview, child-observation and case-study. This methodology was chosen because of its ability to allow the cross-checking of responses and to produce a complete overview of infant children's relationship with the entertainment media. Furthermore, a mixed methodology was considered to be the most appropriate method of investigating infant children's use of the media because it could take into account the qualitative and quantitative perspectives of this research design. Each component of the mixed methodology (questionnaire, child observation, interview, and case study) was evaluated in terms of the present research, providing a rationale for using a mixed methodology.

Chapter 5

Design, Methods and Procedures: Part A

We live in a fantasy world, a world of illusion. The great task in life is to find reality.
Iris Murdoch, quoted by Rachel Billington, interview in The Times, London, April 15, 1983.

1. Introduction

In this chapter, the research methodology used in Part A of this study is outlined. The aim of Part A of the study was to investigate the need for media education for infant children, based on the perceptions of infant teachers, parents of infant children and infant children. The aim of Part B of the study was to implement and evaluate a pilot media education program in two Tasmanian infant schools - if media education was deemed to be essential. The research methodology has been widely influenced by the theoretical orientations discussed in earlier chapters. The aim of this chapter is to describe methodological characteristics, such as the nature of the population, the development and administration of the questionnaires and interview schedule, the selection of photographic and videotaped examples of television content for use with infant children, and the methodology associated with the child-observations.

The sub-topics discussed in this chapter are as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Aim of Part A of the Study, and Research Design Implications
3. Selection of the survey population
   (a) Infant teachers (Kindergarten to Grade 2)
   (b) Parents of four-to-eight year old infant children
   (c) Infant children (4-8 year old)
4. Development of the questionnaires:

(i) Teacher Pilot Study
(ii) Teacher Questionnaire
(iii) Parent Questionnaire
(iv) Infant children's interview schedule

5. Modification of the questionnaires and interview schedule
6. Selection of photographic examples
7. Selection of video excerpts
8. Permission for schools/teachers to participate in the study
9. Circulation of the teacher and parent questionnaires
10. Permission from schools to interview children
11. Permission from parents to interview children
12. Administration of children's interview schedule
13. School and student background
    (i) A. Urban state school
    (ii) B. Outer-urban state school
    (iii) C. Independent non-Catholic school
    (iv) D. City Catholic school
    (v) E. Rural state school
14. Coding and Computational Procedures
15. CHILD OBSERVATIONS:
    15.1 Selection of child observation participants
    15.2 Stimulus television programs
    15.3 Selection of stimulus videos
        15.3.1 Video description: **The Labyrinth**
        15.3.2 Video description: **The Never Ending Story**
    15.4 Recording of facial and body expressions and verbal expressions of fear
    15.5 Environmental setting for child observations
16. Summary

2. Aim of Part A of the Study, and Research Design Implications

Part A of the study was designed to provide a frame of reference within which the experimental pilot work in Part B could be conducted. The aim of Part A of the research was to obtain an understanding of infant children's (a) television and video viewing habits; (b) emotional responses to different types of mass media (e.g. intensity of fear reactions to different types of media content); (c) imitative use of television, video, storybooks, cassette stories, cinema and live dramatic productions; (d) ability to

interpret (clarify or explain the meaning of) judge and make decisions about the media processes and/or content; and (e) personal opinions regarding media effects.

In addition to the above aims, information was sought from parents of four-to-eight year old children and infant teachers regarding the need for early childhood mass media activities, and the identification of priority needs areas for inclusion in mass media awareness activities.

In terms of the research design, the aims of Part A of the study, were to:

(a) obtain qualitative and quantitative data regarding infant children's use, understanding and reactions to the entertainment media, in order that media education curricula could be developed for infant children. With this in mind, both objective and subjective information, provided from as many sources as possible, needed to be gathered. It was therefore decided to obtain perceptions from infant teachers and parents of infant children, as well as from four-to-eight year old infant children, through questionnaires (parents and teachers) and structured interviews (infant children). In addition, it was decided to obtain qualitative data regarding infant children's television/video induced fears, in their normal home environment, using descriptive research methodology (case-study observations).

(b) obtain parental and teachers' perceptions regarding the necessity for media education for infant children, and identify priority areas for developing a needs based media education program for infants. The intention of this part of the study was to obtain a framework on which to base infant media education activities. It was decided to incorporate this aim of the research into the original questionnaires, by directly asking parents and teachers to express their views about the need for media education and to nominate areas that they considered important or priority areas. In addition, the findings of the various questionnaires would also form the basis for media education activities, in that they would reveal children's use and misunderstandings of the media.

3. Selection of the survey population

(a) Infant teachers

In February 1989 a total of 1,063 infant teachers (K-Grade 2) were employed by the Education Department of Tasmania, of whom 803 were full-time employees and the remaining 260 were employed on a part-time basis. Part-time teachers were excluded

from the study on the grounds that they would have reduced contact time with infant children and therefore might not be able to respond to the questions.

It was decided that a 25% survey population (approximately 200 teachers) would be appropriate, with the expectation of a 50% return rate, giving a sample of 12.5% (approximately 100) of the total population of state school infant teachers. A perusal of state schools listed throughout Tasmania, indicated that there were 217 registered state schools in Tasmania with infant pupils (including District High Schools, Primary Schools and Kindergartens not linked to other schools), so a decision was made to send every state registered school one questionnaire.

Thus the survey population consisted of 217 infant teachers, all of whom were randomly chosen from an alphabetical list of all registered schools in the state of Tasmania. For example, every government school in the state (including Kindergartens not attached to schools) was sent one questionnaire, addressed to either a Kindergarten, Prep, Grade 1 or Grade 2 teacher, via the Education Department's internal mail service. The first school on the list was sent a questionnaire (through the Principal) to the Kindergarten teacher; the second school on the list was sent a questionnaire to the Prep teacher; the third school on the list was sent a questionnaire to the Grade 1 teacher and so on. This method of sampling ensured that every infant class teacher had an equal chance of being selected from the sampling frame. Of the 217 questionnaires sent to infant teachers throughout the state school system, 111 (52 %) were completed and returned in the stamped self-addressed envelopes.

It was intended to send questionnaires to the entire population of infant teachers in independent Catholic schools, but a written and telephone approach to Father John Williams indicated that permission would not be granted for questionnaires to be circulated throughout Catholic schools. Further discussions with Father Williams revealed that in his view the questionnaires would be too disruptive to normal school routine. This was unfortunate. However, in light of this news it was decided to send questionnaires to all the independent Catholic schools with infant departments, but not administered by the Catholic Education Office. Eight schools were sent questionnaires (four to each school); even after repeated reminders, just one questionnaire was returned.

Similarly, questionnaires were sent to all infant teachers in independent non-Catholic schools, to ensure a maximum sample of independent teachers. A total of sixteen questionnaires were distributed to four independent non-Catholic schools, of which fourteen were returned.

Table 5.1. below summarizes the number and percentage of teacher questionnaire responses received from state, Catholic and independent non-Catholic schools. This population will be referred to as the respondents or N (total sample).

TABLE 5.1: The number and percentage of teacher questionnaire responses received from state, Catholic and independent non-Catholic schools. (Total N=126)

School type	n=	%
State	111	88.1
Catholic	1	.8
Indep. Non-Catholic	14	11.1
TOTAL N	126	100

(b) Selection of parents

A random state-wide sample of parents was selected by distributing parental questionnaires via classroom teachers. Every fifth school on the list of registered schools in Tasmania was sent three parental questionnaires to be distributed by the nominated classroom teacher. For example, if the Grade 1 teacher had been selected as the teacher designated for a teacher questionnaire, she/he was also asked to randomly distribute three questionnaires to parents of children in her/his class.

In a covering letter to parents, an invitation was given to participate in the survey. However, if they chose not to complete the questionnaire they were asked to pass it on to another parent from their child's class. A total of 153 parents received questionnaires, of which 121 (79%) were returned directly to the researcher in the stamped self-addressed envelope.

(c) Selection of children

As at February 1989, a total of 21,359 children were enrolled in infant classes (all registered schools) throughout Tasmania. This total consisted of: 6,282 kindergarten

children; 3,291 preparatory children; 5,946 grade 1 children; and 5,840 grade 2 children. With the assistance of a colleague, a formula for choosing the sample size was constructed based on the population size, the variables or categories, the minimum statistical cell target required for chi square, and the assumed response (consent) rate. For example, based on the population of 21,359 children, and 5 dichotomous categories or variables (giving 100 combinations), each chi square cell would have an average of approximately 200. A 5% sample should therefore give an average of 10 per cell, with 5 per cell being the minimum target. Assuming that the response rate is 50%, the cell average would then be 5.

It was impractical to interview children throughout the entire state of Tasmania and it was therefore necessary to select an appropriate sampling frame that represented the infant population of Tasmania. After much discussion with colleagues, five schools were chosen as representing schools throughout the state. They consisted of: (a) a rural state school; (b) an urban state school; (c) an outer suburban state school (working class/unemployed area); (d) an inner city Catholic school; and (e) a suburban private middle-class school. The entire sample of children were students of Kindergarten, Prep, Grade 1, Grade 2 or Grade 3 classes in each of the schools and were aged between four and eight years.

As a cautionary measure a total of 400 *consent to participate in interview* forms and details of the research project were sent home to parents of infant children attending the five schools in southern Tasmania. Each of the five schools received approximately 80 'consent' forms, and permission to interview 298 children was given. A total of 292 children were interviewed, and the remaining six children were either absent or not available during the days that the interviews were conducted at the schools.

(4) (i) Teacher's Pilot Study (see Appendix):Conducted October 1988

A questionnaire was chosen as the instrument to obtain information regarding teacher and parent perceptions of infant children's use and understanding of the entertainment media, for the reasons discussed in the previous chapter.

The purposes of the initial teacher's pilot study were to: (a) gather general feedback regarding children's fear reactions and coping strategies to frightening television content; and (b) judge the feasibility and relevance of the questions for infant children. The questionnaire was distributed to 23 infant and primary teachers in four schools (state and independent), and sought reactions from 457 infant and primary children.

A 100% response rate was achieved from teachers who were asked to participate in the pilot study. Appendix A (pages 1-4) contains the results of the pilot study.

(ii) Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix B.1., p. 6.)

Following the initial questionnaire to teachers, a more comprehensive questionnaire was developed for teachers, using some of the ideas extracted from the first pilot study.

Teachers were asked to respond to the questions and were also asked to comment on the length of time it took to complete the questionnaire, as well as report any difficulties relating to the appropriateness or clarity of the questions.

The questionnaire was distributed to twenty infant teachers in five state schools (not the five schools chosen for the research reported on in this study), as well as other people who were prepared to comment on the contents and layout of the questionnaire. These included university lecturers in psychology, education, geography, and statistics, as well as post-graduate university students.

The distribution of the questionnaire to teachers was made through the five school principals, who agreed to distribute the questionnaires to infant teachers at their schools. A 100% response rate was achieved from those teachers who were chosen to participate.

Minor modifications were made to the questionnaire in response to comments made by teachers and others.

(iii) Parent Questionnaire (see Appendix B.2., p. 14)

The draft parent questionnaire was similar to that of the teacher questionnaire and was designed to gather general feedback about children's media use at home. It was administered personally (door-to-door) to twenty parents in two distinct neighbourhoods (unemployed, working class area, and middle/upper income area). Parents of four-to-eight year old children were invited to answer questions while the researcher was present. This procedure was adopted because it allowed the researcher the opportunity to gain direct feedback regarding the clarity and appropriateness of the questions, as well as gauging general reactions to the questionnaire and time needed to answer questions.

Following this questionnaire, minor adjustments were made. The final product contained seven sections that were aimed at gaining information about children's media habits.

(iv) Infant children's interview schedule (see Appendix B.3., p. 28)

The infant children's interview schedule was based on the teacher and parental questionnaires, and included photographic and video examples to assist with question clarification.

In order to test its appropriateness, the questionnaire was administered personally to twenty children, aged between four and eight years, either in their own homes or in the school environment.

In addition to four-to-eight year old children receiving the questionnaire, other people were asked to comment on the contents and layout of the questionnaire. These included infant teachers, consultants, parents, university lecturers, staff at the Education Department Research Branch, non-teaching staff and students at the university.

5. Modification to the Questionnaires and Interview Schedule

The inclusion of photographic and video material to accompany the children's interview was considered to be an appropriate means of ensuring that children interpreted the question correctly and as well it also provided the children with variety and something to do during the interview, which according to Keats (1988) is beneficial in keeping children's attention on the interview.

It would have also been preferable to show parents and teachers the photographic examples and video to help them interpret the questions, however, this was impossible because of the cost involved in reproducing the photographs and video. It was expected that parents may over-react to the verbal descriptions but this was not evident from the earlier questionnaire trials.

As a result of the trials with each group (parents, teachers and infant children) and feedback from advisors, questionnaires were refined. Suggestions were incorporated into the main questionnaire if they were likely to enhance the validity or reliability of the questionnaires. Appendices B.1., B.2., and B.3. contain teacher and parent questionnaires as well as the children's interview schedule.

Table 5.2. below indicates which sections were completed by the respondents in the survey.

TABLE 5.2: Parts of questionnaire administered to parents, teachers and children.

	PARENT	TEACHER	CHILD
Part of Questionnaire:			
General Information	√	√	√
Children's media use	√		√
Emotional arousal of child	√		√
Children's imitative use of media	√	√	√
Children's interpretation of tv	√	√	√
Media's effects on society	√	√	√
Perceived need for media education	√	√	

6. Selection of photographs (to accompany Part C of the children's interview schedule)

A series of short videotaped extracts from scheduled ABC and TAS-TV television programs and pre-recorded videotapes was compiled during late 1988 and early 1989, and later used as the photographic examples of potential fear-evoking stimuli for Part C (emotional arousal - intensity of fear) of the children's questionnaire. The judgement to include or exclude a television or video excerpt, although subjective, was based on the findings of the preliminary questionnaire pilot study and the findings of Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961); Himmelweit, Oppenheim, and Vince (1958); Cupit (1986); Cantor and Sparks (1984); Cantor, Wilson and Hoffner (1986) and others, who had previously suggested that young children are likely to be frightened by scary faces, transformations of characters, dark and mysterious scenes, and acts of violence and aggression on television.

The potentially frightening images ranged from physical aggression, such as hand to hand combat involving two persons resulting in the death of one or both people, to non-violent hostilities such as the appearance of a character's face.

The excerpts were taken from 'C' classified programs, (e.g. **Paddington Bear**, **Sleeping Beauty**) as well as 'AO' classified programs (e.g. **Big Event**). The photographs were taken using a 35mm camera, focused on the television monitor, while the videotape of the potentially frightening excerpts was played at normal speed. The image to be photographed was chosen because of its clarity and appropriateness to the question. The success rate for quality photographic examples of television images was largely a matter of trial and error, with position of the camera, time of day, and proximity to screen being critical factors relating to the success or failure of photographic examples.

The photographic examples were trialled with infant children and evaluated by infant teachers and academics. This process provided refinement and support for the examples, and confirmed them as appropriate for the purposes for which they were intended.

Photographic examples and questions used at children's interview

For ethical reasons, children could not be shown videotaped examples of images that might frighten, upset or distress them. It was extremely important however to make sure that children understood exactly what was meant by the questions. An early pilot study indicated that children were able to understand the questions when 35mm photographs were used to highlight examples of potentially frightening television images. The photographs helped children recall their emotional reactions to such images on television and video. There was no evidence to suggest that any of the children were frightened or upset by looking at the series of photographs. It was decided therefore to use photographic examples to assist children with the questions relating to fear intensity of television and video images. Children were shown a series of photographs of potentially frightening characters and events from television and video.

The following gallery of photographs illustrate the images shown to children together with the accompanying question. The images shown here however are reduced in size. Photographs that were shown to children were 13cm x 10 cm and were mounted on neutral coloured cardboard.

Introduction to questions:

Look at this photo. Do you know who is in the photo? (child's response) Yes that's right, it's Paddington Bear. If you saw Paddington on television, would he make you feel frightened? (child's response) No, of course not, he's funny isn't he? But some things on television might make you feel frightened. I will show you some photographs of different things that are on television, and I will ask you about how frightened they make you feel. Are you ready for the first photo?

(a) Physical aggression/violence involving more than one person: (death or serious injury) hand to hand fighting with or without a weapon resulting in visible injuries or death.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of some people fighting on television. One of the men is stabbed with a knife and he dies. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** ***frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?***

(b) Self-inflicted physical aggression/violence involving one person: (suicide or parasuicide) resulting in visible injuries or death.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of someone who has jumped off a cliff and they are going to fall to the ground and get hurt or they might even die. This was on television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** ***frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?***

(c) Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal: provoked or non-provoked attack resulting in visible injury or death to the person.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of someone who has been hurt by an animal. The animal has run away and is not hurt, but the person is very sick and might die. This was on television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** ***frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?***

(d) Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal: provoked or non-provoked attack resulting in visible injury or death to the animal.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a little dog who has been hurt by a person. The dog was beaten with a stick and is starving and can hardly walk. The dog might die if someone does not help it. This was on television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** ***frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?***

(e) Impending danger of an accident (plane, car, ship, bike).

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a lady who was crossing the road. Just as she got to the middle of the road a car came speeding around the corner and was just about to hit her when I took this photo of my television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** ***frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?***

(f) After effects of an accident (plane, car, ship, bike) resulting in visible wreckage, injury and/or death.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a car that was speeding around a corner and it crashed over a bank. There was a lady driving the car and she had a little boy with her. The car was smashed up and the lady and little boy were injured, and might even die. This was in a story on television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program****? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

(g) Destruction of objects through remote (no physical human contact) aggression and violence: resulting in visible destruction of property through bombing, fire etc.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a plane that was taking people on a holiday. But someone who was very mean put a bomb on the plane and while the plane was flying in the sky the bomb went off and blew the plane to pieces. All of the people were killed. This was in a story on television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program****? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

(h) Destruction of objects through physical human aggression and violence: resulting in visible destruction of property ie. breaking furniture, smashing crockery or glass.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a person on television who is very angry. He is smashing the furniture and all the things in the house. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program****? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

(i) Destruction of objects through natural causes (flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane): resulting in visible destruction of property.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a house that was wrecked by a hurricane. The wind was so strong that it tore the roof off the house and the power pole is leaning over. This picture was on the television news. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program****? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

(j) Directed verbal aggression: such as shouting, argueing, screaming, abusing, cursing involving one or more persons.

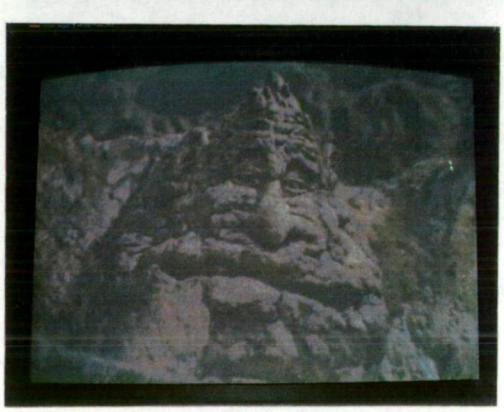
Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a boy who is frightened. He is yelling at another person who is trying to hurt him. He wants the person to go away and leave him alone. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program****? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

(k) Non-violent images: Appearance of character: Including those characters who have human characteristics or are based on the image of human beings, eg. witches, ghosts, goblins etc.

Question: *Look at these three photos closely. Do any of these characters from television frighten you? Which of these three people is the most frightening to you?* (After children respond by choosing one photograph, they are asked:) *If you saw this person on television how would you feel - **not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program**? How would a person like this on television make you feel?*

(l) Non-violent images: Appearance of character: Including those characters who have animal or non-human characteristics, eg. E.T., Daleks on **Dr. Who**, Rock Biter on **Never Ending Story**.

Question: *Look at these two photos closely. Do any of these characters from television frighten you? Which of these two characters is the most frightening to you?* (After children respond by choosing one photograph, they are asked:) *If you saw this character on television how would you feel - **not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program**? How would a person like this on television make you feel?*



(m) Non-violent images: Appearance of character: Including creatures, persons or animals who have the ability to "transform" from one state to another eg. from person to animal, from object to person (eg. **"Transformers", "Teen Wolf", "Incredible Hulk"**).

Question: *Look at these three photos closely. This man is looking into a mirror because he can see and feel that something strange is happening to him. Can you see that his teeth are growing longer in the first photo? In the next photo his face is moving about and he is looking frightened. And in the next photo you can see that he has changed into a wolf. If you saw this happening to a person on television how would you feel - **not** **frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program**? How would a person like this on television make you feel?*

(n) Non-violent images : An event such as the abandonment of a child or animal.

Question: *Look at the photo closely. This little girl has been left by her mother and she is very frightened to be on her own. If you saw this happening to someone on television how would you feel - **not** **frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program**? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

7. Selection of video excerpts: Part E of the children's interview schedule

The video excerpts used in part E (children's ability to interpret, judge and make decisions about media processes and/or content) of the questionnaire were individually chosen as representing either a fact or fantasy situation from television and were used as a visual aid to help children understand the question.

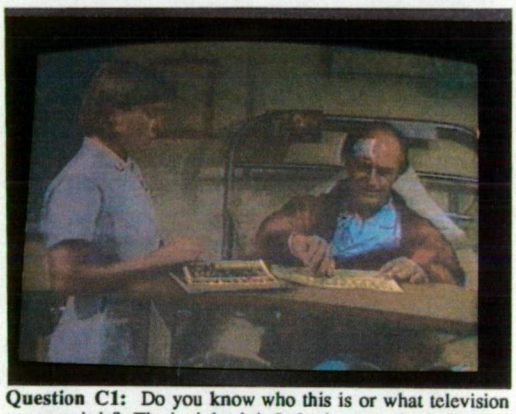
Using the same process as mentioned in the selection of photographic examples, excerpts were taken from television and video programs over a period of several months during 1988 and 1989. The excerpts were then selected and edited. The length of the excerpt (between 7 and 25 seconds) was determined by the 'clip' from television or video and although an attempt was made to allow 10-12 seconds for each excerpt, this was not possible on some occasions. A description of the video excerpts follows in the form of a photographic representation and includes the question which was asked of each child.

Prior to the questions children were asked: *Do you know what* ***real*** *means? What does it mean when we say that something is real? Can you see some things that are real? Do you know what* ***pretend*** *means? What does pretend mean to you? Look at these two pictures on the card. One picture shows a girl and the other picture is of a boy. One of the pictures is a photo of a real person, and the other picture is of a pretend person. Can you point to the picture of the real person, or can you point to the picture of the pretend person. I'm going to show you some television pictures (or photos) of people and things that I saw on my television at home and I want you to see if you can tell me whether the people in the pictures are real or pretend people. Are you ready for the first picture?* (Children were then shown either the videotape extracts or the photographs. Regardless of the presentation used, children were asked the same question, with the word 'photograph' being replaced by the word 'video' or 'television' when video excerpts were used).

Question A1: These people in this photograph are looking in a shop window at Paddington Bear. Have you ever watched Paddington Bear on television? Are the people in the photograph (or on the tv screen) real people like you or me, or are they pretend people?

Question A2: Do you know who this is? That's right, it is a picture of Penny from the story about **Inspector Gadget.** Is Penny a real girl (like you, if the interviewee is a female; or like girls in your class if interviewee is a male), or is she a pretend girl?

Question B: Do you know who this is? That's right, it is Superman and he is flying in the sky. Do you think that people can really fly like Superman or is this just pretend for a television story? Could you or I fly like that do you think?



Question C1: Do you know who this is or what television program it is? That's right, it is Judy the nurse in A Country Practice. Have you seen this program before? Do you think that Judy is a real nurse and that when she is not on television she is a nurse at a real hospital? Or do you think that Judy pretends that she is a nurse in the story on television?

Question D: Do you know who this is? That's right, it is Vincent from **Beauty and the Beast.** Have you ever watched this program on television? Can you see that Vincent does not look like us? He has a lion's face, but he speaks like us. Do you think that creatures like Vincent live in the real world, and that we might see them one day in the street?

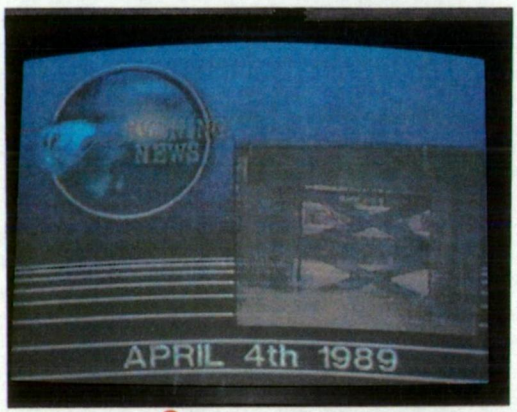
Question E: In this picture, two men are fighting. It is from a story on television - it is not on the news. Do you think that these people are really fighting, or do you think that they are pretending to fight? Do you think they might really hurt each other, and will have to go to a real hospital, or are they just pretending for the television story?

Question F: See the man in the hospital. He has a big bruise over his face near his eye. He was hurt in a story on television. It was not on the news. Do you think the man is really hurt, or do you think that he is pretending to be hurt?

Question G: This is a picture of people playing football in Hobart. Two men have fallen down and are hurt. Other men are running toward them to try to help. The men had to be carried off the ground and could not play football any longer. Do you think that the men were really hurt or do you think that they were pretending to be hurt?

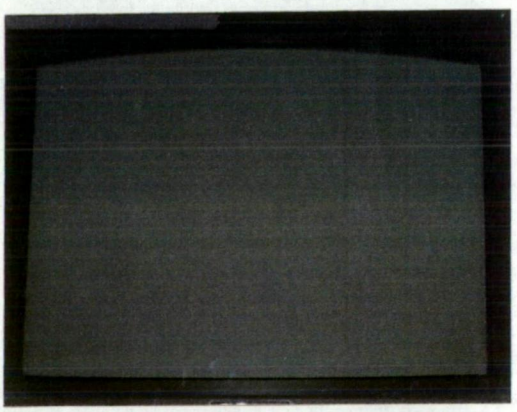
Question H: This is a picture of a man who had a heart attack. He is very ill and is being taken by helicopter to hospital. The doctor is leaning over him to see if he is still alive. This was on the news. Do you think this man is really sick or do you think that he is pretending?

Question I: Do you know what program this picture is from? Yes, that's right it is **A Country Practice**. Can you see the policeman talking to the schoolteacher? Do you think that **A Country Practice** is a true story? When things happen on **A Country Practice** - like a car accident - is it true like on the news?



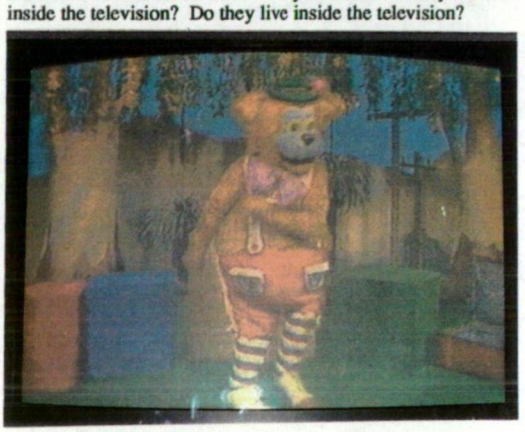
Question J: Here is the beginning of the news on television, and the newsreader. Does the newsreader tell us about true stories or are the stories pretend?

Question K: Sometimes we see people on television who smash up cars or jump from the top of a roof, and they never seem to get hurt. Do you think that we could do things like that without getting hurt too? If we jumped from a tall building, do you think we would get hurt?

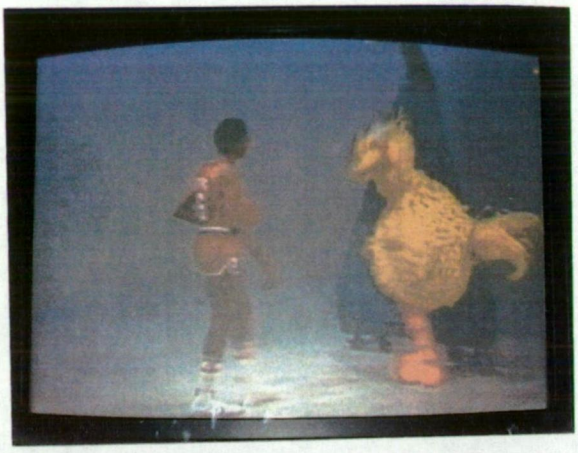


Question L: (demonstration: turn television off to show blank screen) When the television is off we cannot see the people in the stories. But when television is on we can see people on the screen. Where do you think the people go who are on our television screens? Do you think that they are still inside the television? Do they live inside the television?

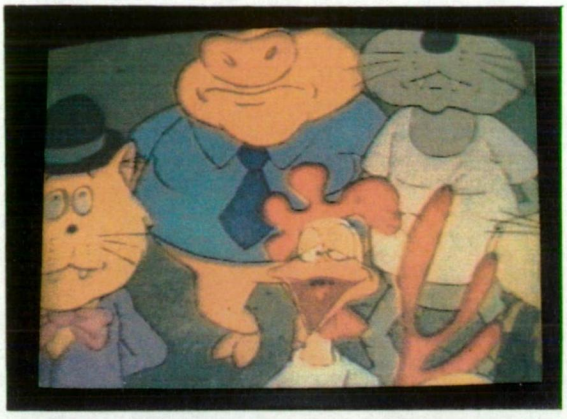
Question M: Do you know who this is? Yes, it is Sooty, Sweep and Sue. Are they real people like you and me?



Question N1: Who is this in the picture? Yes, it is Fat Cat. Is Fat Cat a real cat like you might have at home?

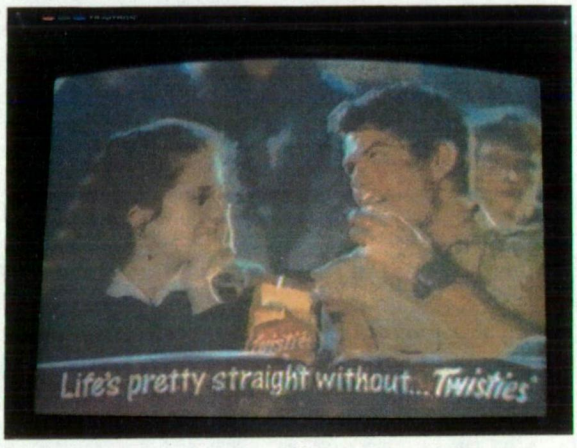


Question N2: Here is Big Bird. Is Big Bird a real bird and he can fly just like all the other real birds?



Question O: These animals on television are talking - just like you and me. Do you think that animals can really talk like us and that these are real talking animals?

Question P: Here is the King on **Gumby**. Is he a real person like us or like Prince Charles?



Question Q: Look at this picture. Have you ever seen this on television before? Do you know why they are eating Twisties on television? What do they have this advertisement on television for?

Question R: Do you know these people from television? Which program are they from? Yes, they are from **The Cosby Show.** Do you think that people in these programs are happier than you - or are you happier than these children?

8. Permission for schools/teachers to participate in the study

Permission for state schools to participate in the study was gained by writing to the Director-General of Education, Mr. K. Axton, and the Consultative Research Committee at the Tasmanian Education Department. Permission from independent non-Catholic and independent Catholic schools was obtained by writing directly to the school principals.

9. Circulation of the teacher and parent questionnaires

Each of the 217 teachers selected was posted a teacher questionnaire via the school principal, with covering letters providing teachers with information about the research and a request to pass on the questionnaire to another teacher at their school, should they choose not to complete it. Also attached to the infant teacher's questionnaire was a letter from Dr. Patricia Edgar (Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation) indicating the value of the research and asking teachers to take the time to complete and return the questionnaire.

In a covering letter to each state school, principals were asked to randomly select an infant teacher, in cases where there was a duplication of classes or grades.As mentioned above, it was decided to send questionnaires to the entire population of infant teachers in independent Catholic and independent non-Catholic schools.

A telephone contact number was provided on all parent and teacher questionnaires, in case respondents had difficulties or queries relating to the questionnaire.

10. Permission from schools to interview children

Selection of schools in which to interview children, and subsequently implement the media education curriculum, was based on the need to obtain a representative sample of infant children.

Permission from schools to participate in the school-based media education programs and infant children's interviews was obtained by approaching state school and independent school principals initially by telephone, followed by personal discussions with teachers likely to be involved, outlining the study, their commitment requirement, time, etc. Five schools were chosen, based on their unique ability to represent the

different types of school in the state, and their interest and commitment to the research area. These schools are identified and discussed in a following section.

11. Permission from parents to interview children

A letter to all parents of infant children was distributed via the class teacher in the five schools selected to participate in the study outlining the study, and the interview materials to be shown to the children. Parents were asked to complete the consent form and return it to the class teacher. Because of the potentially frightening nature of the visual material to be shown to children, parents were also invited in to the school to view the video or photographs prior to interviews. A very small number of parents took up this offer to preview visual images.

12. Administration of Children's Interview Schedule

A total of 292 infant children, consisting of 121 boys and 171 girls, were interviewed at school. Children were interviewed individually or in groups of two or three. Small group interviewing was chosen because some children in the earlier pilot studies had appeared shy or worried by the questions when interviewed individually.

The children were interviewed in a private area outside their classroom or in a vacant room nearby their classroom. Permission had been previously granted by their parents, and children were randomly selected from the list of names provided by the teacher. Where possible, mixed age/class and gender groups were chosen, to avoid peer pressure, or imitation of responses. The children were met by the researcher and escorted to the interview area. The researcher established rapport with the children by asking them about their work and their favourite activities at school. At the place of interview the children were informed that the following questions were about television, movies, storybooks, etc. The interview questions were asked in the same order for all children. Children's responses were recorded on specially prepared recording sheets and any additional information was recorded in a separate book with corresponding numbers for later identification. The decision to show children photographs or videotaped segments depended on the availability of television and video equipment. The interview took approximately 45 minutes for individual children and 45-60 minutes for groups of two or three.

On completion of the questionnaire children were thanked, allowed to choose a poster and given a sticker (which had been previously donated by the Australian Children's Television Foundation) before being escorted back to their classrooms.

13. School and student background

Table 5.3 below shows the number of children, according to age from the five schools selected for the study.

Table 5.3: Children participating in interviews from the five schools according to age (Total = 292).

School	Age				
	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years
A	0	16	21	21	4
B	6	10	7	21	5
C	26	16	9	16	1
D	0	23	23	15	5
E	0	9	22	14	2
TOTAL	32	74	82	87	17

(i) School A: Urban/State/High video area

School A was a state primary school (prep-Grade 6) and as at February, 1989, had a total population of 209 children, of whom 97 (46%) attend the infant section of the school. There was no kindergarten attached to the school and kindergarten children attend a separate kindergarten nearby. Infant classes consist of Prep (n=21); Grade 1 (n=40); Grade 2 (n=36); Grade 2/3 (n=25). All infant teachers employed at the school were female. The total number of children participating in the interviews was 62.

Children attending school A mainly come from surrounding areas, although a few children come from the northern suburbs, even though schools are available in those areas. The suburb in which school A is located is an industrial area, containing industries and factories. Although representing the lower socio-economic class, the newer surrounding subdivisions could be classified as upper working class according

to the school principal. The suburb in which the school is situated, houses several video outlets. These are heavily patronised, according to the owners of the outlets.

(ii) School B: Outer urban/State/working class

School B was a State Primary school situated in an outer northern suburb. As at February 1989, the school had a total population of 283 children, 123 (43%) of whom attend the infant school. Infant classes consist of K (n=39); Prep (n=12); Grade 1 (n=39); Grade 2 (n=33). The Kindergarten teacher was male and all other infant teachers were female. The total number of children participating in the interviews was 49.

Children attending school B mainly come from the surrounding government housing areas, although some children come from the older part of the township. The newer part of the suburb in which the school is situated is approximately 15 years old and consists mainly of government built homes, occupied by working class and unemployed young families. The older section of the township dates back to the 1840s. The suburb is located 25 kms north of the city of Hobart, and has an estimated population of 10,000 (this figure also includes a neighbouring suburb which is also a government housing area). The nearby shopping centre has one video hire outlet.

(iii) School C: Suburban/Independent non-Catholic/ middle class

School C was an independent girls school situated in a middle-upper class suburb, located approximately six kms south of the city of Hobart. As at Term 3 1989, the school (K-12) had a total population of 419 children, 125 (29 %) of whom attend the infant school. Infant classes consist of Kindergarten (n=28); Prep (n=19); Grade 1 (n=15); and Grade 2 (n=22). All infant teachers are female. Although the school is a 'girls' school, boys attend the infant school. The total number of children participating in the interviews was 68.

Children attending school C mainly come from the surrounding area, although some children travel, via school bus or private transport, from other suburbs. There are five video lending outlets in the suburb.

(iv) School D: Inner city/Independent Catholic

School D was an independent Catholic girls school situated in the city of Hobart. The school was administered by Catholic nuns, as opposed to many of the Catholic schools which are administered by the Catholic Education Office. As at February 1989 the

school (P-12) had a total population of 657 children, 94 (14 %) of whom attend the infant school. Infant classes consist of Prep (n= 34); Grade 1 (n=33); Grade 2 (n=27). All infant teachers were female. Although the school is a 'girls' school, boys may attend the infant school. The total number of children participating in the interview was 66.

Children attending school D come from Hobart and the surrounding suburbs, although a few children travel to the school daily from rural areas. Not all of the children who attend the school are Catholic. Video outlets in the area do not necessarily give a true indication of use by families with children attending the school, as most of the students do not live in the city area. It is likely that these families would hire videos from video outlets in their home suburb or from a suburb on the way to their home.

(v) School E: Rural/State

School E was a State primary school situated in a rural town 40 kilometres south of the city of Hobart. The Municipality of Huon had a population of 5,410 as at June 1988, and the estimated population as at February 1989, based on expected growth, was 5,500. The primary school had a total population of 457 children, 222 (48 %) of whom attend the infant section of the school. Infant classes consist of Kindergarten (n=61); Prep (n=26); Grade 1 (n=88); Grade 2 (n=47). The infant teachers are female. The total number of children participating in the interviews was 47.

Children attending school E come from the local rural community. The children travel to school by bus or private transport. Parents are generally working class, being employed in farming, orcharding, or retailing. There is one video lending outlet in the community.

14. Coding and Computational Procedures associated with Questionnaire Data

With the exception of four questions, all questions on the teacher questionnaire were accompanied by coded responses, in order to facilitate the processing of data. The four questions sought bio-data and personal opinions which could be classified at a later stage. For example, question 2 asked teachers to name the school at which they currently worked; question 23 asked teachers to indicate why they chose particular areas as being important to media education for infant children; question 28 asked teachers to outline the general aims and objectives of media education and topics taught, if they had taught media education to students; and question 29 offered teachers the opportunity to

add any additional information about media education or children's experiences with the media.

Both the parent questionnaire and the infant children's interview schedule were designed to facilitate ease of data processing and computation. In addition, the children's interview schedule was accompanied by coded response sheets, on which children's responses were recorded at the time of interview. This technique greatly facilitated data entry.

15. CHILD OBSERVATIONS

Child observations were undertaken as part of this research to ascertain qualitative and detailed information regarding children's emotional (fear) reactions to potentially frightening video contents. It was envisaged that subsequent analysis of the child observations might provide a descriptive, 'rounded' picture of children's reactions to particular media contents, as suggested by Simon (1969, p. 53). It was intended as a follow-up or descriptive appendage to the children's questionnaire. Unlike earlier research into children's fear reactions as a result of exposure to television, this research was conducted in the children's home environment and as such should be an improvement on earlier studies of this nature (Bjorkqvist, 1985; Cantor, 1994).

The child observations were conducted after the media curricula had been implemented (Part B of this research). The reasons for this were two-fold. Firstly, by conducting the child observations after the interviews and media activities, children were then acquainted with the researcher and the video equipment. Secondly, by implementing the child observations after the media activities, it might be possible to determine whether children had learned to cope with frightening characters as a result of the media education.

Each child was observed by the researcher in their own home over two nights. On the first night the child watched the regular television programs that they would normally watch after school. Parents were encouraged to let them watch as they normally would, with the rest of the family, eating, playing etc. During the observations the children's facial and body movements and expressions were monitored using a video camera, and the researcher made notes of verbal comments made by the children at the same time. On the second night the child watched a videotape (either **Never Ending Story** or **The Labyrinth**). During these sessions the same observations took place, followed by two brief questionnaires. One questionnaire asked the child about fear reactions to the video content and the other questionnaire asked parents for biographical data

regarding the child's fear behaviour to a range of different events. Appendices B.4. and B.5. contain both questionnaires.

15.1 Selection of child observation participants

No attempt was made to choose a randomised sample of infant children from the survey population for child observational reports. Instead all parents of infant children attending the two schools in which the pilot media education curriculum was conducted (School A and School C: n=181), received a letter asking them to register their interest in the home-observation study. After considerable coaxing from teachers, ten families agreed to participate in the child-observation section of the study. Four of the children (one boy and three girls) attended the independent middle-class school (School C) and six of the children (three girls and three boys) attended the urban working-class state school (School A). To retain children's anonymity, false names have been used.

15.2 Stimulus television programs

Stimulus television programs consisted of regular television programs viewed by the child (and his/her family) in the family home. These are listed in Table 5.4 below. No attempt was made to alter the family's regular television or video viewing pattern.

TABLE 5.4: Television programs watched by case-study participants in their own homes over a 20 hour period.

Child Observation	Television programs
Subject 1: Michael	Gumby, Superted, Count Duckula
Subject 2: Norman	Gumby, Superted, Count Duckula
Subject 3: Jillian	Gumby, Superted, **Chipmunks** video*
Subject 4: Karen	Sesame Street, Play School, Blinky Bill
Subject 5: Greg	Sale of the Century, Neighbours
Subject 6: Brenda	Family Ties, Neighbours
Subject 7: Marion	Play School, Blinky Bill, The Return of the Antelope
Subject 8: Yolanda	Play School, Blinky Bill
Subject 9: Adam	Abbott and Costello cartoons, The Wizard of Oz cartoon**
Subject 10: Elle	Play School, Blinky Bill, Return of the Antelope

*Videos listed in Table 5.4 were those selected and viewed by the case-study participants and were not chosen by the experimenter. For example, Subject 3 chose to watch a video instead of television on the first day of observation. This was not an unusual practice for her according to her parents. As this part of the research attempted to evaluate the 'true' situation, no attempt was made to change the behaviour of the participants.

** Adam's television programs were recorded from the morning programs.

15.3 Selection of stimulus videos

The aim of observing children whilst they were exposed to potentially frightening video material was to record (using a video camera, and written report) children's fear reactions and behaviour, in their normal home environment. Working from parental and children's pilot study reports regarding videos that had frightened infant children, two videos were chosen to be used during the child-observations as a potential fear-evoking stimulus. The videos were **The Labyrinth** and **The Never Ending Story**. Both combined elements of realism and fantasy, but the content was mainly fantasy. A brief description of the two videos is included below.

15.3.1 Video description: The Labyrinth (97 minutes)

Sarah, the main character in the story, is left alone to babysit her brother Toby while her father and stepmother go out for the evening. However Sarah, who lives in a fantasy world, does not want to mind her baby brother and wishes that he would be taken away by goblins. Her dream comes true when the Goblin King (played by David Bowie) takes Toby off to his castle with the aim of turning him into a goblin. Sarah asks the Goblin King to return her brother, but he refuses and so Sarah must rescue Toby, by making her way through the Labyrinth. All sorts of bizarre creatures live in the maze, many of whom make it difficult for her to reach the Goblin castle and Toby, before the final hour is up. The story concludes with Sarah safely returning home with Toby.

15.3.2 Video description: The Never Ending Story (93 minutes)

The Never Ending Story is about a young boy who escapes into a fantasy world far away from the neighbourhood bullies. The story unfolds when the boy becomes immersed in a mysterious book that transports him to a world of giant flying creatures, large rock biting creatures, massive oceans and giant forests. The boy endeavours to help save the troubled world that is being threatened by The Nothing.

The ten children viewed either **The Labyrinth** or **The Never Ending Story**, depending on whether they had viewed the film before. Previous discussions with parents indicated that one child had viewed **The Never Ending Story** and one child had viewed both the **Never Ending Story** and **The Labyrinth**, *many years ago, as a baby;* in both instances the children said that they had little or no recollection of the video contents. The remaining eight children had not viewed either video. Even if children had remembered the contents of the video, important information might have

been obtained regarding children's fear in relation to events that they remembered as frightening. In this case repeat viewing of a video was not considered to be detrimental to this study.

A brief general questionnaire relating to the viewers' enjoyment of the video, their emotional (fear) reactions to the video, and which characters they would like to be, was developed for use with the children after they had viewed the video (see Appendix B.4.).

15.4 Recording of facial and body expressions, and verbal expressions of fear

Previous researchers (e.g. Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin, 1978; Cohen and Adoni, 1980; and Bjorkqvist, 1985) had successfully used a video camera to record and subsequently analyse pre-school and primary school children's emotional expressions within a laboratory environment. The present research also used this method of recording emotional expressions - within the children's normal home environment. The above mentioned studies found that there was a positive correlation between facial and verbal expressions of fear.

Children's fear reactions to television/video content were measured in two ways: (a) videotaped facial expressions while they viewed the video and television content; and (b) by means of verbal reports during and following the video and television content. Based on the assumptions made by Cohen and Adoni (1980, p. 82), it was assumed that infant children might not verbally report or admit to being frightened by television or video content, because of social expectations, whereas the videotaped expression of fear would be more difficult to conceal.

The aim of videotape recording children's facial and body expressions for this part of the research was to record any expressions that may be interpreted as 'fear reactions' to frightening stimuli. Facial and body expressions were recorded using a Sony video 8 camera which was placed beside the television monitor in the television viewing room, with the lens focused on the child under observation. There was no attempt to conceal the video camera; as mentioned earlier, children were familiar with the video camera and used to being filmed by it. For example, children participating in the home observations had already participated in five weeks of media education at their school. During this time they had been filmed with the video, had used the video camera themselves, and were used to seeing the video at school. Similarly, the researcher had worked with the children during the five week media education period at their school. The children were

relaxed in the researcher's presence, although there were some behavioural indications to suggest that children's reactions to the video or television content were influenced by the researcher's presence (see chapter 7, section 2).

15.5 Environmental setting for child-observations

The ten children participating in the child-observations were observed within their own home environment. This was particularly important since it provided the researcher with the opportunity to observe the child within a natural setting with parents and siblings present. In this sense it provided the researcher with an insight into the 'real' home viewing situation - something not usually obtained in other research. In addition, because of the nature of the video and the possibility of inducing fear in the child, the home setting provided the child with a safe environment, thus not increasing the level of fear by viewing the video in an unfamiliar setting with strangers. In this sense the home environment provided the child with cognitive and non-cognitive elements (e.g. talk with parents, cuddle a toy, sit with parent) that may help reduce fear should they require them, as suggested by Wilson, Hoffner and Cantor (1987).

16. Summary

This chapter outlined the research design, method and procedures adopted for this study, based on the requirements of the research reported here and the methodological insights provided by previous researchers. It provided the foundation for the report of the study conducted for this thesis, in that it defined and discussed the research population as well as discussing the development and application of the questionnaires and interview schedule.

The methodology adopted for this study involved devising an approach with which to collect and analyse data regarding parent, teacher and children's perceptions of the way in which infant children use and understand the media.

The research design and procedures discussed in this chapter, together with the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter, provide the framework for the results which are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Results: Part A of the Study

The true worth of a researcher lies in pursuing what he did not seek in his experiment as well as what he sought.
Claude Bernard (1813-1878) French Physiologist

1. Introduction

Chapter 6 presents the results of the three questionnaires administered to parents, teachers and infant children. The results are presented according to the format of the questionnaire and the propositions presented in Chapter 4. Where practical, parent, teacher and children's responses are presented in Tables so that comparisons can be made between the groups. It should be noted however, in interpreting the data, that not all members of the survey population responded to every question, and therefore the statistics presented in this chapter refer to the actual number of respondents to each question. This figure will be represented by (n=). Unless otherwise specified all other statistics will refer to the total population of parents (N=121), teachers (N=125) or children (N=292).

Analysis of data was carried out using **Statview 512+**, a statistical package for the Macintosh computer. Throughout the results, the term 'significant' indicates that the probability of the results having occurred by chance is less than 5 in 100, i.e. the 5% level. It should also be pointed out that although the chi square test was deemed to be the most appropriate form of statistical analysis for the comparative statistics, it was not suitable or reliable for some of the analyses. For example, chi squares with 1 degree of freedom should not contain cells with expected frequencies of less than five, and where there are more than 2 degrees of freedom, a single cell may have an expected frequency of less than 5, provided that it is not less than 1. In some instances, the cell frequencies (as identified

by the cross-tabulations) are less than 5, and in some cases less than 1. Whenever this arises, chi square analyses are not accepted, because of the reduced reliability of the results. In such cases a description of the number or count of respondents, and/or percentage comparisons are made, either through discussion of apparent trends or table format.

There is only one of the many variables that is continuous in nature, the number of television hours. All the rest are categorical. Hence the analyses are restricted to two kinds: (1) Analysis of variance when TV hours is the independent variable; and (2) Either a full log linear analysis if several categorical variables are being considered, or a standard chi square test of association when two variables are cross-tabulated. Both forms of analyses have been used as and when appropriate.

This study generated an enormous amount of statistical information therefore only the most important and interesting results are presented and discussed in detail. The remaining information or trends are summarised.

This chapter is divided into nine sections. They are:

1. Introduction
2. General information
   - *2.1 Gender of parents, teachers and children*
   - *2.2 Media ownership and access*
   - *2.3 Age of children reported about in the study*
   - *2.4 Location of children /school attended*
3. Children's television and video viewing habits
   - *3.1 Children's television exposure*
   - *3.2 Television channel usually watched by children*
   - *3.3 Children's favourite television program and characters*
   - *3.4 Children's video usage*
4. Emotional (fear) arousal of children
   - *4.1 Children's fear of media contents*
   - *4.2 Children's fear of the media and age differences*
   - *4.3 Children's fear of the media and gender differences*
   - *4.4 Children's fear of the media and school type*
   - *4.5 Intensity of fear experienced by children as a result of exposure to the media*
   - *4.6 Children's fear of news in comparison to drama/movies*
   - *4.7 Children's bad dreams as a result of media exposure*
   - *4.8 Children's preference for watching frightening contents on television*
5. Children's imitative use of the media
   - *5.1 Children's imitation of television and video*
6. Children's ability to interpret, judge and make decisions about the media processes and/or content

6.1 Children's curiosity about the media
6.2 Children's understanding of reality and fantasy on television and video

7. Personal opinions regarding media's effects on children

8. Personal opinions regarding the need for media education for infant children: parents' and teachers' perceptions

2. General information

2.1 Gender of parents, teachers and children

Table 6.1 below indicates the gender of participants who responded to the questionnaire/interview. The disproportionate representation of parents who were female was not considered unusual in this instance since mothers generally spend more time than fathers with infant children. Similarly, the disproportionate gender representation of infant teachers was not unusual because most infant teachers in Tasmania are female.

TABLE 6.1: Gender of parents, teachers and children who responded to the questionnaire/interview schedule.

Participants	Female		Male		
	%	n=	%	n=	Total n=
Parents	90.9	(110)	9.1	(11)	121
Chn of parents	53.7	(65)	46.3	(56)	121
Teachers	96.8	(121)	3.2	(4)	125
Children	58.6	(171)	41.4	(121)	292

2.2 Media ownership and access: parents, teachers and children

Table 6.2 indicates ownership and/or access to media equipment. With regard to the condition of media equipment in schools, 96% of teachers indicated that the equipment was in good working order, 1.6% indicated that the equipment was not in good working order, and 2.4% indicated that they did not know the condition of the equipment.

TABLE 6.2: Parents, teachers and childrens responses in relation to media ownership/ access.

Equipment		Respondent		
		Parents	Teacher	Children
		%	%	%
Television:	Yes	100 (121)	100 (125)	98.6 (288)
	No			1.4 (4)
Video:	Yes	64.5 (78)	97.6 (122)	79.8 (233)
	No	35.5 (43)	2.4 (3)	20.2 (59)
Camera:	Yes		44.0 (55)	
	No		56.0 (70)	
Cassette:	Yes		97.6 (122)	
	No		2.4 (3)	
Photocopier:	Yes		97.6 (122)	
	No		2.4 (3)	

2.3 Age of children reported about in the study

Table 6.3 indicates the age of children reported about in the study.

TABLE 6.3: Age of children reported about in the study.

Respondent	Age of child					
	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8years	n=
	% n=	% n=	% n=	% n=	% n=	
Parents	17.3(21)	22.3(27)	30.6(37)	20.7(25)	9.1(11)	121
Children	11.0 (32)	25.3 (74)	28.1(82)	29.8(87)	5.8(17)	292
Teachers*	21.9	25.2	30.9	21.9		

*** Teachers were asked to indicate the median age of classes about whom they were reporting.**

2.4 Location of children/school attended

Parents and teachers were asked to report the name of the city, suburb or town in which they lived. This information was then defined in terms of urban or rural status, according to

metropolitan boundaries. This indicated that 61.7% of respondents lived in inner city areas or suburbs and 38.3% of respondents lived in rural areas. Table 6.4 below indicates the school type attended by children and teachers.

TABLE 6.4: School type attended by children reported about in the study.

Respondent	School Type					
	State		Catholic		Independent N.C	
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=
Children	54.1	(158)	22.6	(66)	23.3	(68)
Teachers	88.1	(111)	.8	(1)	11.1	(14)

In addition to the above personal details, teachers were asked to identify their class or grade. This information was not recorded for analytical purposes, but instead was used for follow-up contact.

3: CHILDREN'S TELEVISION AND VIDEO VIEWING HABITS

Proposition 1.1

3.1 Children's television exposure

With regard to the amount of time children spend watching television, parents were asked to indicate the times that their child usually watched television (before and after school and weekends). Parents indicated that their children (four-to-eight year old) usually watched television for an average of 13.5 hours per week. Parental reports of children's viewing time ranged from 3.5 to 35 hours per week. As the bar chart below indicates, 30 of the children view television for 1-1.5 hours daily; and 24 of the children view television for approximately 2 hours daily, according to parental reports. Three parents indicated that their children usually watched television for approximately five hours per day.

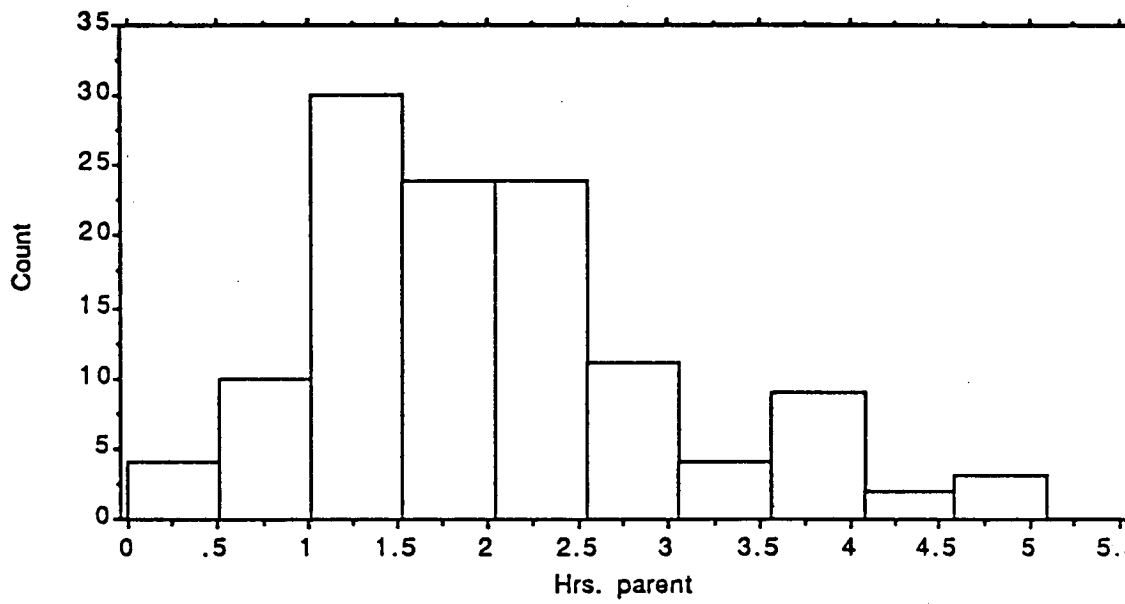


FIGURE 6.1: Parental report of children's time spent watching television on a daily basis (N=121). (mean=2.24)

Children were asked to report all television programs viewed by them on the day prior to the interview. The researcher read out a list of television programs to help children recall their television exposure. If there was any doubt about the truth of the response the child was asked to tell the researcher about the program content. This procedure was considered to be a reliable method of gathering this sort of data from young children.

The interviews with the children revealed that they watched television for an average of 21.5 hours per week. Hours spent viewing ranged from 0 to 11.5 hours per day. According to information given, children attending the suburban state school were the heaviest viewers of television. Table 6.5 below indicates the average viewing time of children from five schools.

TABLE 6.5: The average television viewing hours per week as indicated from children's self-report of television programs viewed on the evening prior to the interview.

School Type	TV hours /wk (average)	Mean	SD	n Gender
Suburban state school	30.9 hours per week			
Males:		4.21	2.312	31
Females:		4.6	1.88	30
Outer suburban state school	29.5 hours per week			
Males:		4.8	2.22	25
Females:		3.6	1.58	22
Inner city Catholic School	19.5 hours per week			
Males:		2.8	1.35	30
Females:		2.5	1.17	36
Rural state school	16.1 hours per week			
Males:		2.3	1.75	25
Females:		2.5	1.84	22
non-Catholic indep. school	14.2 hours per week			
Males:		1.5	1.60	9
Females:		2.0	1.57	59

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) of school type and hours of television viewing revealed a significant effect F (23.649) p > .001. The following Table shows the interaction effects between schools.

TABLE 6.6: ANOVA interaction effects: School type and TV hours (Schools defined: SSS=Suburban State School; OSSS=Outer Suburban State School; ICCS=Inner City Catholic School; NCIS=Non-Catholic Independent School; RSS= Rural State School).

School Comparison		Mean Difference
SSS vs	OSSS	.163
SSS vs	ICCS	1.691*
SSS vs	NCIS	2.455*
SSS vs	RSS	2.024*
OSSS vs	ICCS	1.528*
OSSS vs	NCIS	2.292*
OSSS vs	RSS	1.862*
ICCS vs	NCIS	.764*
ICCS vs	RSS	.334
NCIS vs	RSS	- .43

*** significant at 95%**

As expected, younger children watched less television than older children. An age X television viewing hours ANOVA revealed a significant effect F (6.239) p .001. Table 6.7 below reports the mean difference comparisons between the age groups.

TABLE 6.7: ANOVA: Age/TV hours mean difference comparisons.

Age Comparison	Mean Difference
4 yrs vs 5 yrs	- .881*
4 yrs vs 6 yrs	-1.289*
4 yrs vs 7 yrs	-1.52*
4 yrs vs 8 yrs	-2.6*
5 yrs vs 6 yrs	- .408
5 yrs vs 7 yrs	- .639*
5 yrs vs 8 yrs	-1.719*
6 yrs vs 7 yrs	- .231
6 yrs vs 8 yrs	-1.311*
7 yrs vs 8 yrs	-1.08*

*** significant at 95%**

In terms of gender differences, an ANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference between the television viewing hours of males and females F (4.83) p > .0 Boys were more likely to be heavier television viewers (M= 3.40) than girls (M= 2.88).

3.2 Television channel usually viewed by children

According to parental reports, 5% (6) of the children watch only TAS-TV, 53.3% (64) of children watch ABC, 41.7% (50) watch a combination of TAS-TV and ABC. No parents reported that their children watched SBS television.

Children were not specifically asked this question, although an analysis of previous night's television viewing indicated that 23.3% of children had viewed TAS-TV, compared with 18.1% of children who had watched ABC television programs. The remaining 58.6%

children watched a combination of TAS-TV and ABC programs on the evening prior to the questionnaire. No children had reported they watched SBS programs.

3.3 Children's favourite television programs and characters

At the time of conducting the survey, parents indicated that the following television programs were children's favourite:

Inspector Gadget	(rated as 1 by 25 parents)
Play School	(rated as 1 by 21 parents)
Sesame Street	(rated as 1 by 8 parents)

No other television programs were popular amongst large groups of children, according to parental responses.

The children's views, however, were somewhat different to the parents responses. For example, at the time of conducting the interviews, children reported that their favourite programs, in order of preference, were: **City of Gold, Neighbours,** and **Play School.**

Sixteen children named *Zia* (female character from **City of Gold** cartoon) as their favourite television character, followed by 12 children who named *Kylie Mole* (**Comedy Company**); 8 children listed *Belle* (cartoon character in **Belle and Sebastian**), *Inspector Gadget,* (cartoon character in **Inspector Gadget**) and *Kylie Minogue* (live action drama character called Charlene in **Neighbours**) as their favourite television character. No other television characters were frequently rated by children as being their favourite character.

3.4 Children's video usage

Based on parental reports, no one particular video title was popular amongst four-to-eight year old children. The the following three videos were the most frequently mentioned by parents: **Inspector Gadget** (identified by six parents); **Never Ending Story** (identified by six parents); and **E.T.** (identified by five parents).

Children were asked to list videos they had recently viewed and according to their reports, the following videos were the most frequently mentioned by children: **Care Bears**

(identified by ten children); **Sooty** and **Inspector Gadget** (nine children each); **Never Ending Story** and **Donald Duck** (six children each); **Rambo, Mary Poppins** and **E.T.** (five children each) and **Crocodile Dundee** (four children). In addition, some children mentioned video titles such as **Tour of Duty, Commando, Ninja** and **Mad Max.**

As Table 6.8 shows, the vast majority of children (according to parental response) watch less than one video per week.

TABLE 6.8: The percentage of children viewing videos each week according to parental reports (n=120)*.

Videos per week	none		< 1		1-2		3-5		more than 5	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
	13	12	22	42	16	8	2	2	2	1
Combined %	20.83	(25)	53.33	(64)	20.0	(24)	3.33	(4)	2.5	(3)

* 78 parents indicated that they had a video recorder, however, some parents indicated that their children watched videos at other people's homes (e.g. grandmothers home), which accounts for the discrepancy between figures.

In relation to reports of young children watching 'adult-rated' television and video programs, teachers were asked to indicate whether they believed that any of their students had viewed what is commonly termed a 'video nasty' (a video that contains extreme violence or images of a pornographic nature). Of the 123 teachers who responded to this question, more than one-third (35.8%) thought that children in their class had viewed a 'video nasty', compared to 36.6% who believed that their children had not. A further 27.6% of teachers indicated that they did not know. A few of the teachers who indicated that their children might have viewed a 'video nasty', listed video titles such as **Dawn of the Mummy, The American Werewolf in London, Sinderella** (Teacher's note: *We had just read a story together of the fairy tale Cinderella. One child said they had seen it last night on video and they were all running around without their clothes on*), **The Hand, First Blood, Rambo, Jaws, Texas Chainsaw Massacre** (2 reports), **Friday 13th, The Living Dead, Exorcist.** Other teachers indicated that they did not know the name of the videos, but because of the children's descriptions (e.g. there was blood all over the man's head, violence and sexual nature of the videos) indicated that they were 'nasties'.

4. EMOTIONAL (FEAR) AROUSAL OF CHILDREN

Proposition 2.1

4.1 Children's fear of media contents

Table 6.9 indicates gender differences of children's self reports and parental reports of children's fear by the contents of various media.

TABLE 6.9: Children's self-reports and parental reports of children's fear (as indicated by the child reporting fear to a parent, crying, seeking comfort, or leaving the room) by the contents of various entertainment media and the gender of the child.

	Reported Fear											
Medium	% YES		% YES		% NO		% NO		% DK		n=	n=
	Child		Parent		Child		Parent		Parent		Child	Parent
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M F	M F
TV	45.8	64.7	64.8	69.3	54.3	35.3	29.6	29.0	5.6	1.7	120 170	54 62
VIDEO	45.4	49.7	31.9	40.7	54.6	50.3	61.7	54.2	6.4	5.1	119 167	47 59
BOOK	22.3	24.7	15.7	23.3	77.7	75.3	82.3	75.0	2	1.7	121 170	51 60
CASS	15.8	14.7	6.1	11.7	84.2	85.3	89.8	88.3	4.1	0	101 150	49 60
CINE	25.2	34.4	27.6	44.8	74.8	65.6	68.1	48.3	4.3	6.9	103 160	47 58
DRAM	11.1	6.5	12.8	17.5	88.9	93.5	80.8	73.7	6.4	8.8	27 77	47 57

Proposition 2.2

4.2 Children's fear of media and age differences

In relation to children's fear of television contents and the age of the children, Table 6.10 indicates all age groups (four-to-eight years) have been frightened at some time by the contents of television according to parental and children's self-reports.

TABLE 6.10 Parental report of children's fear and children's self-reports of fear of television contents, according to age (n=116).

Medium/Partic/ Response	4 years		5 years		6 years		7 years		8years		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n	n=
TV:Child: YES	77.4	(24)	54.1	(40)	53.7	(44)	55.3	(47)	58.8	(10)	165
TV: Child: NO	22.6	(8)	45.9	(34)	46.3	(38)	44.7	(38)	41.2	(7)	125
TV:Parent: YES	65	(13)	80.8	(21)	72.2	(26)	54.2	(13)	50	(5)	78
TV: Parent: NO	35	(7)	15.4	(4)	25	(9)	45.8	(11)	30	(3)	34
TV: Parent: DK	0	(0)	3.8	(1)	2.8	(1)	0	(0)	20	(2)	4
VIDEO: Child: YES	44.8	(14)	50.0	(36)	45.1	(37)	49.4	(42)	47.1	(8)	137
Video: Child: NO	55.2	(16)	50.0	(36)	54.8	(45)	50.6	(43)	52.9	(9)	149
VIDEO: Parent: YES	27.8	(5)	39.1	(9)	43.8	(14)	39.1	(9)	20	(2)	39
Video: Parent: NO	66.7	(12)	56.6	(13)	50	(16)	56.6	(13)	70	(7)	61
Video: Parent: DK	5.5	(1)	4.3	(1)	6.3	(2)	4.3	(1)	10	(1)	6
BOOK:Child: YES	43.3	(14)	31.1	(23)	19.5	(16)	13.8	(12)	23.5	(4)	69
Book: Child: NO	56.7	(17)	68.9	(51)	80.5	(66)	86.2	(75)	76.5	(13)	222
BOOK: Parent: YES	25	(5)	20.8	(5)	24.2	(8)	12.5	(3)	10	(1)	22
Book: Parent: NO	70	(14)	79.2	(19)	75.8	(25)	87.5	(21)	80	(8)	87
Book: Parent: DK	5	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	10	(1)	2
CASSETTE:Child:YES	0		15.0	(9)	14.1	(11)	19.2	(15)	18.7	(3)	38
Cassette:Child:NO	100	(19)	85.0	(51)	85.9	(67)	80.8	(63)	81.3	(13)	213
CASSETTE:Parent:YES	10.5	(2)	16.7	(4)	12.5	(4)	0		0		10
Cassette: Parent:NO	84.2	(16)	83.3	(20)	87.5	(28)	100	(24)	90.0	(9)	97
Cassette:Parent:DK	5.3	(1)	0		0		0		10.0	(1)	1
CINEMA:Child:YES	29.6	(8)	34.4	(21)	30.4	(24)	30.0	(24)	26.7	(4)	81
Cinema:Child:NO	70.4	(20)	65.6	(40)	69.6	(55)	70.0	(56)	73.3	(11)	182
CINEMA:Parent:YES	41.1	(7)	29.1	(7)	40	(12)	41.6	(10)	30	(3)	39
Cinema: Parent:NO	47.1	(8)	66.7	(16)	53.3	(16)	54.2	(13)	70	(7)	60
Cinema: Parent: DK	11.8	(2)	4.2	(1)	6.7	(2)	4.1	(1)	0	(0)	6
DRAMA:Child:YES	0		4.2	(1)	12.0	(3)	13.8	(4)	0		8
Drama: Child:NO	100	(23)	95.8	(23)	88.0	(22)	86.2	(25)	100	(3)	96
DRAMA:Parent:YES	16.7	(3)	9.1	(2)	23.3	(7)	12.5	(3)	10	(1)	16
Drama:Parent: NO	72.2	(13)	86.4	(19)	66.7	(20)	79.2	(19)	90	(9)	80
Drama:Parent: DK	11.1	(2)	4.5	(1)	10	(3)	8.3	(2)	0	(0)	8

4.3 Children's fear of media and gender differences

Cross-tabulations of children's self-reports of fear responses to each of the entertainment media sources (television, video, storybook, cassette, cinema and live dramatic performance), controlling for gender, indicated that with the exception of television there were no significant differences. In relation to children's self-reported fear of television the results indicate that, as expected, females were more likely to report fear than males. A chi square test indicated that there was a significant relationship ($X2 = 9.461$ df=1 $p > .01$).

There is considerable disagreement in the results between boys' fear of television as reported by the parents and by the boys themselves, with 64.8% of parents indicating that their boys had been frightened by television contents as against only 45.8% of the boys themselves. However, girls' self-reports of fear (64.7%) are only slightly less than those of parents (69.3%).

4.4 Children's fear of media/school type

Children enrolled at independent non-Catholic schools were more likely to be frightened by the contents of television than children enrolled in state or Catholic schools, according to the results (see Table 6.11 below). A cross-tabulation of school type and children's self-report of television induced fears ($X2 = 17.754$ df=2 $p<0.001$); storybook fears ($X2=9.156$ df=2 $p \geq .01$); cassette story fears ($X2=15.609$ df=2 $p<.001$) and movie fears ($X2=36.55$ df=2 $p < .001$) indicated that there were significant relationships.

It is interesting to note that few state or Catholic school children had been to a live performance. Only 26 state school children (constituting 16.5% of the total population of state school children) and 18 Catholic school children (representing 27.3% of all such children interviewed) reported that they had been to a live performance, compared with almost all of the independent non-Catholic school children who had been to a live dramatic performance (60, or 88.2% of such children interviewed).

TABLE 6.11 The percentage of children attending either state, Catholic or independent non-Catholic schools who indicated that they had been frightened by the contents of a variety of media.

Response	Type of School			
	State	Catholic	Independent N.C.	
	% n=	% n=	% n=	n=
Television:YES	46.5 (73)	62.1 (41)	76.1 (51)	165
Television:NO	53.5 (84)	37.8 (25)	23.9 (16)	125
Video:YES	44.5 (69)	48.5 (32)	44.4 (36)	137
Video: NO	55.5 (86)	51.5 (34)	44.6 (29)	149
Storybook:YES	17.1 (27)	34.8 (23)	28.4 (19)	69
Storybook: NO	82.9 (131)	65.2 (43)	71.6 (48)	222
Cassette:YES	11.8 (16)	31.0 (18)	6.9 (4)	38
Cassette:NO	88.1 (119)	68.9 (40)	93.1 (54)	213
Cinema:YES	14.1 (19)	50.0 (32)	46.9 (30)	81
Cinema:NO	85.9 (116)	50.0 (32)	53.1 (34)	182
Drama:YES	11.5 (3)	5.6 (1)	6.7 (4)	8
Drama:NO	88.5 (23)	94.4 (17)	93.3 (56)	96

Proposition 2.3

4.5 Intensity of fear experienced by children as a result of exposure to the media

Following on from the general question regarding children's fear of various forms of entertainment media, parents and children were asked to indicate the degree to which infant children were frightened by different types of media contents, and in doing so were presented with a descriptive and/or graphic list of fourteen potentially frightening images for infant children. Parents were given a written description of the fear-evoking image in their questionnaire and children were presented with a photographic description as well as a graphic verbal description of the fear evoking image, before rating each item in terms of the intensity of fear produced in children. (As pointed out in chapter 5, parents were not provided with photographs for this section, because of the high cost of reproducing the colour photographs). As children and parents did not respond to the same stimuli, comparisons are not appropriate, therefore data is presented in separate graphs and are

interpreted individually. A four point Likert-type scale was used to measure and record parental and children's responses. The results of both parental and children's responses are condensed and presented in Figures 6.2 and 6.3; a brief discussion follows. Tables and analyses are contained in Appendix D. For ease of interpretation, the fear terms are defined below:

1 = (no fear at all) the child would not usually be frightened, upset or distressed by such scenes.

2 = (mild fear) the child would appear to be frightened, may or may not report the fear to another person; would continue to watch the program without becoming upset.

3 = (moderate fear) the child would appear to be visibly frightened, would probably report the fear to another person; might not wish to continue viewing the program; might leave the room; might cry.

4 = (intense fear) the child would scream or cry in a distressed manner, seeking support of another person (likely to be an adult), might vomit, and would be unable to continue watching the program.

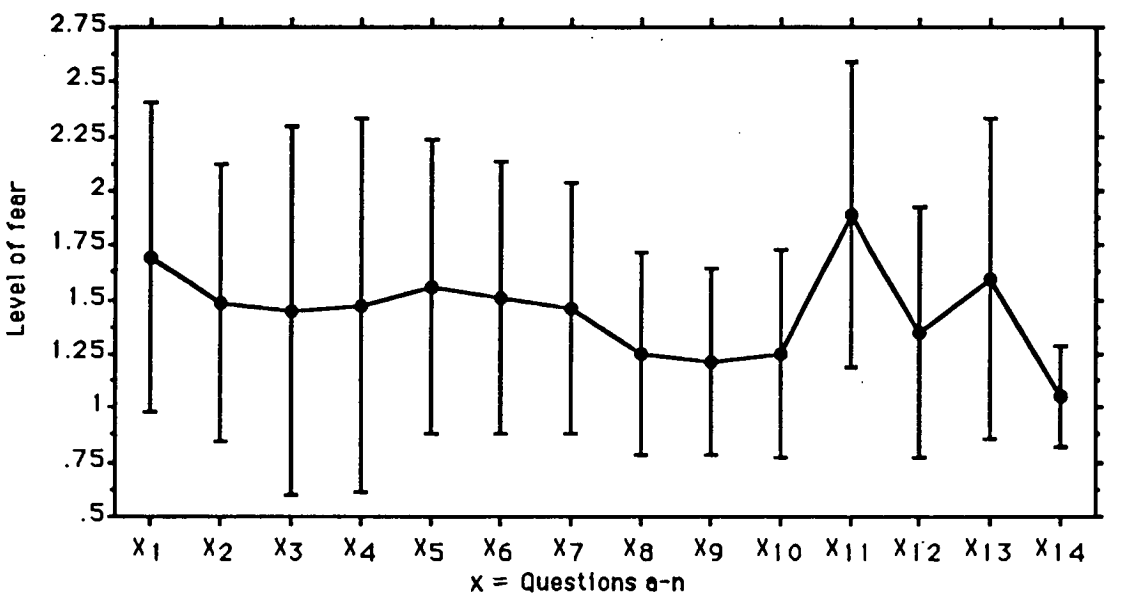


FIGURE 6.2: Children's self-reports of intensity of fear as a result of exposure to potentially frightening images on television and video.

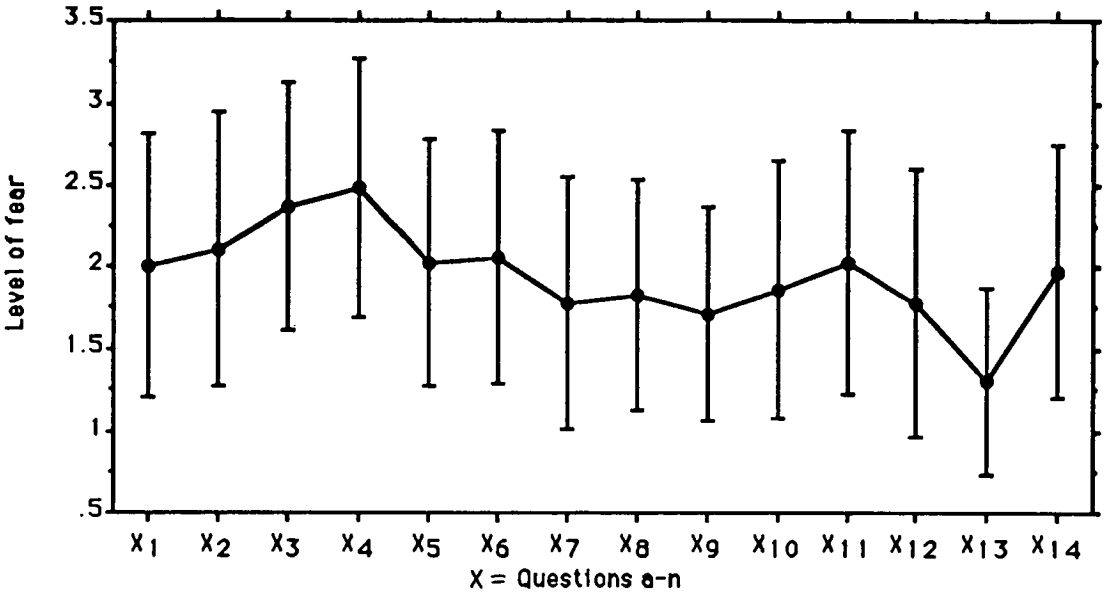


FIGURE 6.3: Parental reports of children's fear intensity as a result of exposure to potentially frightening images on television and video.

In terms of children's self-reports of intensity of fear in relation to the series of images, children were 'fearless' to most of the images shown. No children indicated that they ever experienced (or would experience) intense fear (Level 3) to any of the images presented. Questions 'e' (impending danger of an accident), 'k' (the appearance of a character - human characteristics) and 'm'(characters who are able to transform from a person to an animal) were likely to induce the highest level of fear in children (Level 2 - moderate fear), according to children's self-reports. Images that were least likely to induce fear in children were 'c', 'd', 'h', 'i', 'j', 'l' and 'n'.

According to parents, most of the images described in the questionnaire, are likely to cause fear in their children. Some images were regarded as potentially more frightening than others. For example, questions 'b', 'c' and 'd' were more likely to cause an 'intense fear response' (Level 3) than any other questions according to parents.

In response to question 'a', 45.1% of parents indicated that their children were mildly frightened of physical aggression/violence (involving hand to hand fighting resulting in visible injuries or death) and 23.5% of parents indicated that their children were moderately frightened of such violence on television or video.

In reference to parental responses for question 'c' (children's intensity of fear as a result of exposure to physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal, resulting in the visible injury or death to the person) only 12% of parents indicated that their children would not be frightened when exposed to such content on television or video. Forty four percent of parents indicated that their children would be mildly frightened by such events.39% of parents indicated that their children would be moderately frightened by such violence. Five parents (5%) indicated that their children would be intensely frightened by such events, but no children reported similar fears.

Ten percent of parents indicated that their children would not be frightened by physical aggression/violence involving the death or serious injury of an animal by a human (question 'd'). A further 38.2% of parents reported that such an event would cause mild fear in their children; 43.1% indicated that it would cause moderate fear in their children, and a further 7.8% of parents indicated that such violence would cause intense fear.

In relation to question 'g', 41.4% of parents indicated that their children had no fear of destruction of objects through remote aggression and violence, such as bombing, fire etc., although 39.6% of parents indicated that their children would be mildly frightened by such destruction on television and video, and a further 18% of parents indicated that their children would be moderately frightened by such images.

In relation to question 'k', 30.2% of parents indicated that their children would not be frightened of the appearance of a character, such as witches, ghosts, goblins etc., a further 37.1% of parents reported that their children would be mildly frightened of such images, and 32.7% of parents indicated that their children would be moderately frightened of characters such as these.

According to children's self-reports and parental responses, those most likely to experience greater fear intensity (levels 3 or 4) to <u>all</u> forms of television and video content are seven and eight year old girls from an independent non-Catholic school background.

4.6 Fear of news in comparison to drama/movies

The majority (51.7%) of parents reported that their children were not more frightened by the contents of a news or current affairs bulletin, than of a dramatic episode of a series or movie. 35.1% of parents reported that their children were more frightened by the contents of a news or current affairs bulletin and the remaining parents (13.1%) did not know.

Children's responses to the same question revealed that 15.8% of children (n=45) reported that news or current affairs bulletins were more likely to frighten them than a dramatic episode of a series or movie as against 84.2% (n=239) who reported that they were not likely to become more frightened.

Cross-tabulations of parental perceptions of children's increased fear as a result of exposure to news bulletins as compared with dramatic series of movies, controlling for children's age, sex and location (rural and urban differences), indicated that there were no significant differences. However, similar cross-tabulations of children's self-reports indicated that, when controlling for sex, there was almost a significant relationship ($X2 = 3.588$ df=1 $p>.05$). Table 6.12 below indicates the percentage of children who reported that news bulletins were more likely to make them frightened than a dramatic episode of a series or movie on television, according to gender differences.

TABLE 6.12: Percentage of children who reported that news bulletins were more likely to make them frightened than a dramatic episode of a series or movie on television, according to gender differences (n=284).

Response	Sex of Children	
	Male	Female
	% n=	% n=
YES	10.4 (12)	19.5 (33)
NO	89.6 (103)	80.5 (136)

Similar cross-tabulations of children's self-reports of fear of television news, controlling for school type and age, indicated that there was a significant relationship for children's age ($X2 = 10.872$ df=4 p=.028). Examination of the results indicated that seven year old children were more likely to report fear from television news than any other age group reported about in this study; 25.9% of seven year old children indicated that they were more frightened of television news than drama on television, compared with 12.5% of eight year old children, 12.5% of six year old children, 13.5% of five year old children and 3.4% of four year old children.

Proposition 2.4

4.7 Bad dreams and nightmares as a result of media

A further question sought to determine whether children suffered any delayed emotional reactions in the form of bad dreams and nightmares as a result of exposure to entertainment media contents.

Table 6.13 below indicates the percentage of children who reported bad dreams and nightmares as a result of exposure to media contents compared with parental reports of the same.

TABLE 6.13: Comparison of parental perceptions of children's bad dreams and nightmares as a result of exposure to entertainment media contents, and children's self-reports of bad dreams and nightmares as a result of exposure to the media.

RESPONDENT/MEDIA						
	YES		NO		DON'T KNOW	
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=
TELEVISION:						
Parent	22.4	26	68.9	80	8.6	10
Children	55.7	161	44.3	128		
VIDEO						
Parent	14.0	16	83.3	95	2.6	3
Children	32.3	93	67.7	195		
STORYBOOKS						
Parent	8.9	10	87.6	99	3.5	4
Children	11.0	32	89.0	259		
CASSETTE STORIES						
Parent	.90	1	96.4	106	2.7	3
Children	6.4	17	93.6	247		
MOVIES AT CINEMA						
Parent	4.6	5	87.0	94	8.3	9
Children	14.3	40	85.7	239		
LIVE DRAMA						
Parent	3.7	4	91.7	99	4.6	5
Children	0		100.0	96		

Additional cross-tabulations were carried out on whether there may be gender differences in children's television-induced bad dreams according to parental perceptions. The results

indicated that a slightly higher percentage of parents of boys (24.1%) indicated that their children had bad dreams as a result of television content, compared with 21% of parents of girls. A chi square indicated that the difference was not significant. However, a similar cross-tabulation of children's self-reported bad dreams as a result of exposure to television contents, when controlling for gender differences, indicated that there was a significant relationship ($X2 = 4.028$ $df=1$ $p < .05$). Table 6.14 below indicates the percentage of children who reported that they had bad dreams as a result of watching television content.

TABLE 6.14: The percentage of males and females who reported that they experienced bad dreams as a result of viewing television content (n=289).

	MALE		FEMALE		
BAD DREAMS	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
YES	48.3	(58)	60.9	(103)	161
NO	51.7	(62)	39.1	(66)	128
	100	(120)	100	(169)	289

An ANOVA was carried out on children's television viewing hours and self-reports of bad dreams in relation to television, which indicated that no significant relationship existed.

Cross-tabulations of parental reports of gender differences and children's bad dreams as a result of exposure to video, storybook, cassette tape, cinema, and live dramatic performances produced cell frequencies too low (even after eliminating 'don't know' categories) to allow chi square analysis.

An analysis of children's self-reports of bad dreams as a result of exposure to video indicated that when controlling for sex differences, more girls than boys reported video-induced bad dreams. For example, 36.5% of girls reported bad dreams associated with video contents, compared with 26.5% of boys who indicated that they had experienced video-induced bad dreams. A chi square indicated that the relationship was not significant at the .05% level.

Likewise, a cross-tabulation of children's self-reports of bad dreams as a result of exposure to storybook contents and contents of cassette story indicated that, although slightly more girls than boys reported bad dreams to each of the entertainment media, the differences were not significant.

In relation to children's self-reports of bad dreams associated with the contents of movies at the cinema, almost one-fifth of the girls indicated that they had experienced bad dreams as a result of exposure to movies at the cinema. A chi square indicated that there was a relationship between children's self-reports of cinema-induced bad dreams and gender differences ($X2=6.753$ $df=1$ $p<.01$). Table 6.15 highlights the gender differences in children's self-reports of cinema induced fear.

TABLE 6.15: The percentage of children who reported they had experienced bad dreams as a result of viewing movies at the cinema, according to gender differences (n=279).

	MALE		FEMALE		
BAD DREAMS	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
YES	7.8	(9)	18.9	(31)	(40)
NO	92.2	(106)	81.1	(133)	(239)
	100	(115)	100	(164)	(279)

Additional cross-tabulations were carried out to test the relationship between the age and location (geographic) of children's and parental reports of bad dreams, or the age and school type (state, Catholic or independent non-Catholic) of the children and their self-reports of bad dreams associated with any of the forms of entertainment media discussed. However, none of these cross-tabulations produced significant results, and they will not be presented here.

Proposition 2.5

4.8 Children's preference for watching frightening content on television

According to parental reports, none of the children liked to watch what was described in the questionnaire as *a very frightening program* on television or video. However, children's self-reports indicated that 28.8% (83) of the children reported that they enjoy watching *very frightening programs* on television and video. One fifth of the 118 parental respondents (20.3%) reported that their children enjoy watching programs that are *not very frightening*, compared with 23.3% children (n=288). The remaining 79.7% of parents indicated that their children enjoyed watching programs that would *not frighten them at all*, compared with 47.9% children.

In addition, a chi square was carried out to determine if there was a relationship between children's age and their self-reported enjoyment of frightening program contents (Table 6.16), which similarly indicated a highly significant relationship ($X2 = 36.932$ df=8 $p < .001$).

TABLE 6.16: The percentage of children reporting enjoyment of frightening program content, according to age differences (n=288).

	AGE					TOTAL	
TV/VIDEO CONTENT	4 yrs	5 yrs	6 yrs	7 yrs	8 yrs	Total	n=
very frightening	12.9	13.9	25.9	42.5	64.5	28.8	83
not very frightening	22.6	26.4	19.8	23.0	29.5	23.3	67
not at all frightening	64.5	59.7	54.3	34.5	6.0	47.9	138

A close examination of the results indicated that four, five and six year old boys were more likely than girls of the same age, to report enjoyment from watching a program with very frightening content. All of the four-year-old children who indicated that they liked watching very frightening programs were boys, and 80% of both five and six year old respondents were boys. However, this finding did change with increasing age; boys accounted for just over half of the seven year old responses, and just a little under half of the eight year old responses.

A similar cross-tabulation (see Table 6.17 below) of children's self reported enjoyment of frightening programs and gender also indicated that there was a significant relationship ($X2 = 32.919$ df=2 $p < .001$).

TABLE 6.17: The percentage of children reporting enjoyment of frightening program content, according to gender differences (n=288).

	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
TV/VIDEO CONTENT	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=
very frightening	47.1	(56)	16.0	(27)	28.8	(83)
not very frightening	16.8	(20)	27.8	(47)	23.3	(67)
not at all frightening	36.1	(43)	56.2	(95)	47.9	(138)
TOTAL	100	(119)	100	(169)	100	(288)

A cross-tabulation of children's self-reports of enjoyment of frightening or non-frightening television or video programs and school type indicated that considerably more state school

children reported 'enjoyment' of both very frightening, and the not very frightening programs, compared with Catholic and non-catholic independent school children who much preferred programs that were not frightening at all. For example, over one-third of the state school children indicated that they enjoyed watching very frightening television and video programs, compared with just over one quarter of Catholic school children, and 12.1% of independent non-Catholic school children. Table 6.18 illustrates these results. A chi square to determine whether a relationship between school type and enjoyment of particular content indicated that there was a significant relationship ($X2 = 15.138$ df=4 $p > .01$).

TABLE 6.18: The percentage of children who reported enjoyment of programs containing frightening and non frightening content, according to school type (n=288).

	STATE		CATHOLIC		INDEP. N.C.	
TV/VIDEO CONTENT	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=
very frightening	37.2	(58)	25.8	(17)	12.1	(8)
not very frightening	19.2	(30)	27.2	(18)	28.8	(19)
not at all frightening	43.6	(68)	47.0	(31)	59.1	(39)
TOTAL	100	(156)	100	(66)	100	(66)

A 'preference for watching frightening television' X 'children's television hours' ANOVA revealed a significant effect $F= (6.947)$ $p > .001$. Children who preferred to watch 'very' frightening television content were also more likely to be the heavy television viewers (M=3.759) than children who preferred to watch programs that were 'not very' frightening (M=3.045), or children who did not like to watch frightening programs (M=2.737).

5. CHILDREN'S IMITATIVE USE OF THE MEDIA:

This section of the questionnaire sought parents', teachers' and children's reactions to questions about four-to-eight year old children's imitative use of television, video and other media. The results will therefore be presented in Table format, so that comparisons of responses from each group can be made. But when interpreting the results, it should be kept in mind that parental and children's responses were drawn from single observations and self-reports, whereas teachers' responses were drawn from wide experience with many children. It should also be remembered that differences between parental perceptions and teachers' perceptions do not necessarily indicate unreliable responses, as the parents' perceptions are based on individual children's behaviour while they are at home, and the

teachers' perceptions are based on children's behaviour at school. This perspective presents the results from various viewpoints, and includes that of the children in their self-reports.

Proposition 3.1 and 3.2

5.1 Children's imitation of television and video

As Table 6.19 shows, there is general agreement between the three groups of respondents, with each indicating that approximately 50% of the infant children imitate television and video contents. It is interesting to note that a considerable proportion of parents (35.6%) indicated that their children *often* sang songs from television and video, in comparison to only 7.6% of children who self-reported that they *often* sang songs from television and video. It may not be surprising that only 9.3% of teachers indicated that children *often* sang songs from television and video, because children may not get an opportunity to do so within the school environment. In general terms however, parental, teacher and children's responses confirmed that although many infant children imitate or use television and video in their activities at home and school, these imitations were not harmful or anti-social (as determined from analysis of behaviour).

TABLE 6.19: The percentage of parent, teacher and children's reports of imitative behaviour as a result of the child discussing, imitating or using experiences from TELEVISION OR VIDEO in his/her daily activities.

	PARENT				TEACHER				CHILDREN			
	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n
DRAW	45.5	44.5	10.0	(110)	40.3	54.6	5.1	(119)	50.7	43.4	5.9	(290)
ROLE	18.1	62.9	19.0	(116)	21.2	61.8	17.0	(123)	47.2	48.3	4.5	(290)
TELL	33.7	52.3	14.0	(107)	23.9	69.0	7.1	(113)	55.9	40.3	3.8	(290)
PLAY	48.2	40.7	11.1	(108)	21.6	56.0	22.4	(116)	57.4	39.9	2.7	(291)
SING	15.2	49.2	35.6	(118)	42.4	48.3	9.3	(118)	40.6	51.7	7.6	(288)

Further examination of the children's self-reports indicated that when controlling for children's age, sex and school type, no significant differences were found for each experience (drawing, role-playing, telling, playing, singing) with the exception of singing. Girls more frequently indicated that they sang songs from television or video, than did boys; 60.9% of girls said they *sometimes* sang songs; and 5.9% indicated that they *often* sang songs from television while only 33.1% indicated that they *never* sang songs from television. In contrast, 38.7% of the boys indicated that they *sometimes* sang songs from television and 10.1% said they *often* sang songs from television and video, while 51.3%

indicated that they *never* sang songs from television. A chi square revealed that there was a significant relationship between children's self reports of imitating singing from television and video, when controlling for gender differences (X2 = 13.94 df=2 p< .001).

A chi square to determine whether there was a significant relationship between children's school type and children's self-reported imitation of songs from television and video, revealed that there was a significant relationship (X2 = 16.425 df=4 p> .01). Children enrolled at independent non-Catholic schools were more likely to report that they sang songs from television and video than children from the other groups. Thus, 5.9% of independent non-Catholic school children indicated that they *often* sang songs from television and video, 71.6% indicated that they *sometimes* did, and the remaining 22.4% indicated that they *never* sang songs from television and video. State and Catholic school children were likeminded in their responses, with 47.7% of state school children, and 42.4% of Catholic school children indicating that they *never* sang songs from television and video; 45.8% of state school children and 45.6% of Catholic school children indicated that they *sometimes* sang such songs and the remaining 6.4% of state school children and 12.1% of Catholic school children indicating that they *often* did so.

In respect of children's age and their self-reported imitative singing behaviour, a chi square indicated that seven and eight year old children were more likely than younger children to sing songs from television and video, although the differences were not significant at the .05 level.

Cross-tabulations of parental responses indicated no age or sex differences in relation to children's imitative singing behaviour. However, teachers' responses indicated that independent non-Catholic school children were more likely than other children to sing television related songs. This finding was not significant.

ANOVA was carried out on children's self-reports of imitation of television X television viewing hours, but there was no significant interaction effect.

Children's imitation of storybooks

With regard to parents' and teachers' perceptions of children's imitative use of storybooks, and children's self-reports of imitative behaviour as a result of exposure to storybook experiences, a higher proportion of teachers indicated that children imitate and use storybooks in their activities at school than did parents and children. Table 6.20 illustrates these differences.

TABLE 6.20: The percentage of parental, teacher and children's reports of imitative behaviour in terms of the child discussing, imitating or using experiences from STORYBOOKS in his/her daily activities (e.g. 'Cinderella' dancing; pretending to be Captain Pugwash fighting with a sword).

	parent				teacher				child			
	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=
DRAW	46.1	43.1	10.8	(102)	15.1	53.8	31.1	(119)	55.3	42.3	2.4	(291)
ROLE	35.2	59.0	5.7	(105)	21.2	61.1	17.7	(113)	70.4	28.2	1.4	(291)
TELL	28.3	52.8	18.9	(106)	19.5	52.2	28.3	(113)	69.7	28.9	1.4	(291)
PLAY	63.3	32.6	4.1	(98)	58.4	33.7	7.9	(101)	71.8	26.5	1.7	(287)
SING	46.6	35.9	17.5	(103)	41.3	45.2	13.5	(104)	72.4	26.5	1.1	(275)

According to children's self-reports, there was a slight trend for independent non-Catholic school children - rather than State or Catholic school children - to tell others about storybook contents. This finding was similarly confirmed by teacher's reports. According to children's self-reports, State school children were more likely than Catholic or independent non-Catholic school children to imitate storybook illustrations, role-play characters, and sing rhymes or songs from storybooks - although these findings were not significant. These trends were not supported by teachers. For example, teacher responses indicated that independent non-Catholic school children were more likely to imitate storybook contents than State school children (Catholic school responses were not compared as only one teacher responded from Catholic schools).

Six, seven and eight year old children were more likely than younger children to imitate storybook contents according to children's self-reports and the reports of parents; and girls were more likely than boys to imitate storybook contents according to parents, teachers and children. These trends were not significant.

Children's imitation of audio cassette stories

The vast majority of children indicated that they *never* imitated or used cassette story experiences in their daily activities (Table 6.21); and parental and teacher reports similarly confirmed this view, with the majority of parents and teachers reporting that infant children never imitated or used experiences from cassette story tapes in their activities at home or school. Of particular interest are the results relating to children's singing of songs from cassette story tapes: parents reported that 43.3% of children *never* imitated such behaviour, as did 50.0% of teachers, and 74.4% of children also reported that they *never* sing the songs from story cassettes.

Cross-tabulations of children's imitative behaviour as a result of exposure to cassette stories, controlling for gender, school type, age indicated that cell frequencies were too small or were not significant at the .05 level. However, according to children's self-reports, there was a trend for State school children rather than Catholic or independent non-Catholic school children to draw pictures, role-play, tell others about cassette tape contents, and sing songs associated with audio cassette stories. Five, six and seven year old girls were more likely than four or eight year old children to imitate cassette tape contents according to parents, teachers and children. Children's self-reports indicated that State school children were more likely than Catholic or independent non-Catholic children to imitate cassette contents, although this trend was not supported by teachers. For instance, a higher proportion of independent non-Catholic school teachers indicated that their students imitated audio cassette contents. Girls were more likely to imitate cassette contents; this was confirmed by parents, teachers and children's responses.

TABLE 6.21: The percentage of parental, teacher and children's reports of imitative behaviour in terms of the child discussing, imitating or using experiences from CASSETTE TAPES WITH THE ACCOMPANYING STORYBOOK in his/her daily activities (e.g. singing the song from "Snow White"; pretending to be Peter Pan flying).

	parent				teacher				child			
	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=
DRAW	78.4	19.6	2.0	(102)	55.9	35.1	9.0	(110)	81.3	17.6	1.1	(182)
ROLE	63.8	33.3	2.9	(105)	58.0	33.0	8.9	(112)	87.9	10.9	1.2	(174)
TELL	61.4	27.7	10.9	(101)	49.1	42.4	8.5	(106)	86.9	11.9	1.2	(168)
PLAY	83.8	14.1	2.0	(99)	80.4	17.6	2.0	(102)	85.3	13.5	1.2	(170)
SING	43.3	35.6	21.1	(104)	50.0	34.3	15.7	(108)	74.4	25.6	0	(164)

Children's imitative use of movies at the cinema

The majority of children, according to parental, teacher and self-reports, do not use movie material for imitative purposes. But parents', teachers' and children's evidence indicated that children sometimes discuss the contents of movies with other people (Table 6.22).

Cross-tabulations of children's imitative use of movies at the cinema, controlling for gender, age, and school type, revealed that cell frequencies were either too small or produced non-significant results, or both. According to children's self-reports there were no apparent trends in children's imitative drawing behaviour as a result of movie viewing, although there was a trend for State school children, more than Catholic or independent non-Catholic school children, to role-play movie characters. Independent non-Catholic children however, were more likely to tell others about the movie contents than other children; and non-Catholic independent and State school children were more likely than Catholic school children to sing songs from movies. Girls were more likely than boys to tell parents about the contents of a movie at the cinema, and play games about movie contents - according to parental and children's responses. All age groups and all school groups imitated cinema contents, according to parental and teacher responses.

TABLE 6.22: The percentage of parental, teacher and children's reports of imitative behaviour in terms of the child discussing, imitating or using experiences from MOVIES AT THE CINEMA in his/her daily activities (e.g. drawing of Bambi running from the hunters; pretending to be Pippi Longstocking scrubbing the floor).

	parent				teacher				child			
	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=
DRAW	80.0	18.9	1.1	(90)	70.1	26.2	3.7	(107)	64.9	32.2	2.9	(208)
ROLE	71.6	23.9	4.5	(88)	72.0	22.4	5.6	(107)	66.0	33.5	.5	(209)
TELL	52.2	42.4	5.4	(92)	63.5	31.8	4.7	(107)	43.0	54.1	2.9	(209)
PLAY	86.4	12.5	1.1	(88)	74.8	20.4	4.8	(103)	79.0	21.0	0	(210)
SING	69.7	23.6	6.7	(69)	77.6	18.7	3.7	(107)	61.7	36.4	1.9	(206)

Children's imitative use of live dramatic productions

The vast majority of children reported that they never imitated or used live dramatic experiences in their daily activities, and this was supported by parental and teacher reports. With the exception of talking to other people or telling people about the live dramatic performance, children rarely used the information for imitative purposes, according to their self-reports. Thirty percent of children indicated that they sometimes or often tell other people about live drama performances, but very few children use the information in their activities. From parental and teacher responses, it was similarly found that approximately

30% of the children discuss the contents of live drama with parents or teachers, or others, but are less likely to use live drama in their everyday activities at school or home. Table 6.23 shows the results.

TABLE 6.23: The percentages of parental, teacher and children's reports of imitative behaviour in terms of the child discussing, imitating or using experiences from LIVE DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS (e.g. Peter Pan, Seven Little Australians) in his/her daily activities (e.g. singing Captain Hook's song; telling the story of "The Secret Garden" to others).

	parent				teacher				child			
	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=	never	some	often	n=
DRAW	86.4	12.5	1.1	(88)	77.4	21.6	1.0	(102)	92.4	6.1	1.5	(66)
ROLE	75.3	21.5	3.2	(93)	79.2	17.8	3.0	(101)	90.5	9.5	0	(63)
TELL	68.5	26.1	5.4	(92)	69.3	28.7	2.0	(101)	69.4	27.4	3.2	(62)
PLAY	91.7	7.1	1.2	(84)	86.1	12.9	1.0	(101)	96.8	3.2	0	(62)
SING	70.9	22.1	7.0	(86)	84.9	14.1	1.0	(99)	86.9	11.5	1.6	(61)

Not surprisingly, all cross-tabulations produced cell frequencies too low for accurate analysis of the results and chi squares could not be conducted. The reporting of trends is not appropriate as almost all children responding to this question attended an independent non-Catholic school.

In addition to giving a 'yes' or 'no' response, parents, teachers and children were asked to give examples of children's imitative behaviour. Many of them chose not to give examples, but of the few that did, these could usually be classified as neutral or prosocial, rather than antisocial behaviour. For example, a parent of an eight year old boy from Tarraleah reported that her son *made a guitar and pretended to be Young Einstein after watching the movie*; *sang the Tasmanian carpet cleaning advertisement from television*; sang theme songs from story cassettes, *drew pictures of Ghostbusters after reading a Ghostbuster story*; and *discussed the live production of Annie with his friends*. A prep/grade 1 teacher from a rural state school indicated that she had 'sometimes' observed children singing the **Inspector Gadget** theme song from television; and had 'sometimes' overheard children discussing the movie **Roger Rabbit**. A small number of teachers (3 only) and parents (1 only) reported imitative behaviour that could be classified as antisocial. For example, an urban state school kindergarten teacher indicated that some of her students imitated fighting behaviour from **He Man** cartoons. The parent of a six year old boy from Georgetown reported that her son *'often' pretended to be Rambo in his play*, and *'often' drew pictures of army tanks after watching the* ***Rambo*** *movie*. The parent said *my child is very army orientated as his father was in the regular army for nine years*. Analysis of children's negative imitative behaviour in terms of children's ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality was considered to be unnecessary and inappropriate.

In another question relating to children's imitation of television contents, children were asked: *When you see people in a television program and they are fighting, does it make you want to fight too?* According to the results, 15.1% of the children indicated that such content did make them want to fight, 1.7% said that sometimes it made them want to fight, as against 83.2% of children who indicated that such scenes did not make them want to fight. Not surprisingly, boys were more likely to report a desire to imitate fighting after watching fighting on television.

6. CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO INTERPRET (CLARIFY OR EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF), JUDGE AND MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT MEDIA PROCESSES AND/OR CONTENT

Proposition 4.1

6.1 Children's curiosity about the media

Table 6.24 below provides interesting insights into the frequency with which children ask questions about the nature and content of television and other media. Of most interest is the fact that children *often* ask their parents questions about television contents (according to their parents), and to a much lesser extent children ask teachers questions about television (according to teacher reports). But it is somewhat unusual that all parents who responded to this question, indicated that their children asked questions about television either *sometimes* or *often,* while over 50% of children indicated that they never asked questions regarding the nature or content of television. According to children's self-reports, few children ask parents, teachers or others questions about storybooks, cinema, cassette tapes, or live drama, although over a third of the children indicated that they *sometimes* or *often* asked questions about video or television contents.

TABLE 6.24: Parental, teacher and children's responses on children's questions about the content or nature of television and other media (percentages).

	parent				teacher				child			
	often	occas	never	n=	often	occas	never	n=	often	occas	never	n=
TV	67.2	32.8	0	(119)	17.6	43.7	38.7	(119)	6.2	40.1	53.7	(289)
Book	51.7	43.2	5.1	(118)	65.0	28.2	6.8	(117)	.7	15.8	83.5	(291)
Video	31.2	42.2	26.6	(109)	12.4	37.2	50.4	(113)	.7	34.7	64.5	(282)
Tape	11.0	48.6	40.4	(109)	10.3	39.2	50.5	(107)	0	12.8	87.2	(211)
Cine	19.2	50.9	29.8	(104)	2.8	18.9	78.3	(106)	2.1	21.0	76.9	(243)
Drama	19.4	31.1	49.5	(103)	13.2	25.5	61.3	(106)	0	21.5	78.5	(79)

A cross-tabulation of children's self-reports of asking questions about the content or nature of television, controlling for gender differences, indicated that there was a significant relationship ($X2 = 8.822$ $df = 2$ $p > .01$). The results indicate that girls were more likely to ask questions about television content than boys, although a higher percentage of boys (9.2%) *often* asked questions about television, compared with only 4.1% of girls who reported that they *often* asked questions about television contents. Table 6.25 below provides the cross-tabulation results.

TABLE 6.25: Children's self-reports of asking questions regarding the nature and content of television, according to gender differences.

	MALE		FEMALE			
	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL	n=
Often asks questions	9.2	11	4.1	7	6.2	18
Not often	30.8	37	46.8	79	40.1	116
Never asks questions	60.0	72	49.1	83	53.7	155
		120		169		289

But cross-tabulations of children's self-reports of the frequency with which they ask questions about the contents or nature of television provided cell frequencies too low to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed. Likewise, cross-tabulations of children's, parents, and teachers' reports of the frequency with which children ask questions about the contents and nature of television, indicated that when controlling for sex, age, school type and location, found cell frequencies too low to obtain reliable levels of significance.

Proposition 4.2

6.2 Children's understanding of reality/fantasy on television/video

Responses were sought from parents and teachers on their perception of children's understanding of the reality and fantasy content of television and video; as well children were asked - using photographic or video examples as an aid to explain questions - to indicate whether they thought particular characters and events from television were real or fantasy. The Table below presents the results of the 15 questions relating to children's

understanding of fantasy and representations of reality on television. The questions have been sorted, according to the four levels of Representations of Reality which were discussed earlier in the thesis. Tables 1-15 in the Appendix section presents the results of the 15 questions. A summary of the general trends in relation to age, gender and school differences follows the Table below.

TABLE 6.26: Children's, parents' and teachers' responses relating to whether the child or children in question understand the contents of television. (NB: yes/sometimes combined responses only).

Representation of Reality/ Question:		Respondent		
		Children	Teachers	Parents
1.	G	25.7	19.7	14.3
	H	15.1	21.8	9.3
	J	15	11.4	12.5
2.	C	18.2	80.8	50.9
	E	35.3	51.2	27.1
	F	31.2	52	35.3
	I	26.1	79.2	57.9
	K	18.8	54	29.2
3.	B	6.2	54.4	33
	D	6.8	60	32.8
	N	2.1	24.2	11
4.	A	9.6	41.2	21.7
	M	3.1	19.2	14.9
	O	1.0	31.2	12.5
	P	0.7	8.9	5.9

It is felt that further statistical analysis is unnecessary, given that the questions within each group are disparate, and the comparisons within each group (e.g. parents, teachers and children) are self-evident. As far as levels 3 and 4 of Representations of Reality, children are quite clear about what is fantasy and reality on television. Parents are less sure of their children's understanding of television fantasy and reality, and teachers are even less sure of their students understanding of television content. In terms of the questions listed under level 1 Representation of Reality, parents, teachers and children have responded similarly. But as far as level 2 Representation of Reality, teachers even more than parents have a

different perception than children, although quite a few children have difficulty in understanding questions listed under level 2.

According to children's self-reports, in almost all instances, boys were more likely than girls to misunderstand television fantasy characters and events - those identified as level 3 and 4 *representations of reality*. For example, boys were more likely than girls to believe that: magical effects (e.g. Superman flying) could happen in real life; ugly creatures from television exist in the real world; live drama stories such as **A Country Practice** were true stories; that dangerous stunts could be performed by normal people; Sooty puppet characters were real human beings; and that cartoon animals were real talking animals. Parental responses similarly reflected this trend, with two exceptions. Parents believed that girls were more likely than boys to believe that magical effects could happen in real life; and drama stories on television were true.

According to children's self-reports, girls were more confused than boys by television events that were similar to real life events - those identified as level 1 and 2 *representations of reality*. For example, more girls than boys believed that characters in **A Country Practice** and **Neighbours** continue to be those people in real life. This difference was significant ($X2=8.267$ $df=2$ $p<.01$), although parents and teachers' responses did not confirm these findings. Also, according to children's self-reports, girls were more likely than boys to be confused about whether actors were really injured in drama series. This trend was not significant, but was supported by parents and teachers responses.

In terms of school differences, children's self-reports indicated that independent non-Catholic school children were more likely than state or Catholic children to believe that television characters in programs such as **Neighbours** and **A Country Practice** continue to be those characters in real life. This difference was significant ($X2 = 11.882$ $df=4$ $p= .0183$). Teachers' responses did not confirm this view. According to children's self-reports, independent non-Catholic school children were less likely than State school or Catholic children to understand the concept of advertising, but again this finding was not supported by teachers.

Two additional questions (l and q) sought to determine children's understanding of the concept of broadcasting and advertising. A third question (question r) was included to change the tone of the question and to prepare children for the next set of questions. In terms of question 'l', children, parents and teachers indicated that children do not believe that actors and people on television stay inside the television set when it is off.

Respondents were less clear about children's understanding of advertising. For example, 40.1% of children were unsure of the role of advertising on television according to their self-reports; more than 48% of parents and over 60% of teachers indicated that children either did not or were unsure about whether children understood the role of advertising on television.

Proposition 4.3

Following the analysis of each of the 15 questions it was evident that four, five and six year old children were more likely to be confused by television fantasy and reality than older seven and eight year old children. This view was expressed by all three groups of respondents.

7. PERSONAL OPINIONS REGARDING MEDIA'S EFFECTS ON CHILDREN:

Proposition 5.1 and 5.2

Parents and teachers were asked three specific questions on their personal opinions regarding media's effects on children and the community in general. The first question sought to determine parental and teacher perceptions regarding violence in television and video, and their perception of whether such programs might have a lasting negative (antisocial) effect on the behaviour of children in their care. The second question asked parents and teachers whether they felt that violence in television and video programs led to an increase in the amount of violence in their community. The third and final question (which refers to proposition 5.2) in this section of the questionnaire asked whether parents and teachers personally believed that criminally-minded people might use information from a television program or video to plan or commit a crime. The results of the three questions are shown in Table 6.27.

TABLE 6.27: The percentage of parents and teachers who believe that violence on television and video may have a negative effect on the behaviour of their children or students.

	YES/MAYBE (COMBINED)		NO		DON'T KNOW		
RESPONDENT	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Question: Whether violence on tv and video may have a negative effect on the behaviour of their chn							
Parent	65.3	(79)	26.4	(32)	8.3	(10)	(121)
Teacher	99.2	(124)	.8	(1)	0	(0)	(125)
Question: Does violence on tv lead to violence in the community							
Parent	74.4	(90)	9.9	(12)	15.7	(19)	(121)
Teacher	79.2	(99)	5.6	(7)	15.2	(19)	(125)
Question: Whether they personally believe that criminally-minded people might use info from tv for crime							
Parent	93.3	(113)	1.6	(2)	4.9	(6)	(121)
Teacher	95.2	(119)	.8	(1)	4.0	(5)	(125)

Cross-tabulations produced cell frequencies of less than five, and were therefore not valid for chi square analysis, but an examination of the data indicated that there were very few differences when controlling for sex, age, area, and school type.

Infant children were asked five different questions at the conclusion of their interview, three of which related to their personal opinions regarding the effects of video and television on them; the fourth and fifth questions were inserted to lighten the tone of the questionnaire before children were returned to their classroom. It should be noted that the final two questions were not included for analytical purposes, and therefore will not be discussed in detail, either in the results section or the discussion section of this thesis.

Proposition 5.3

The results of question 1 were reported in the section about children's imitation of television/video contents. The second question in this section asked children: *Do you like to see people fighting on television?* The results are presented in Table 6.28. A chi square indicated that the relationship was highly significant ($X2 = 25.211$ df=2 $p < .001$).

TABLE 6.28 The percentage of children who liked to see fighting on television according to sex (N=292).

	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=
Like to see fighting on tv	41.3	(50)	15.8	(27)	26.4	(77)
Do not like to see fighting on tv	57.0	(69)	83.6	(143)	72.6	(212)
Sometimes like to see fighting	1.7	(2)	.6	(1)	1.0	(3)

A cross-tabulation to determine whether there was a relationship between children's self-reported liking for violence on television, when controlling for school type, are presented in Table 6.29 below. A chi square to determine whether there was a significant relationship between preference for fighting and school type indicated that there was a significant relationship, although two of the cells had frequencies of less than one which formally invalidated the results ($X2 = 15.176$ df=4, $p > .01$).

TABLE 6.29: The percentage of children who like to see fighting on television according to school type (state, Catholic and independent non-Catholic) (N=292).

	SCHOOL TYPE					
	STATE		CATHOLIC		INDEP.N.CATHOLIC	
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=
YES	34.2	54	21.2	14	13.2	9
NO	63.9	101	78.8	52	86.8	59
SOMETIMES	1.9	3		0		0
TOTAL		158		66		68

The third question asked children: *Do you think that people fight a lot (in their houses, or out in the street) in your neighbourhood or community?* According to the results, less than one-quarter (22.8%) of all children who responded to the question (n=290) thought people fought a lot in their community, while 76.5% of children thought that people did not; a further .7% of children who indicated that they did not know. A cross-tabulation of children's age, sex and school type in relation this question indicated that no differences were evident.

As mentioned earlier, the final two questions for children were intended to lighten the tone of the interview prior to returning children to their classroom, and as such were not

intended for analytical purposes. But it is interesting to note the character roles children would like to occupy for a day, if given the opportunity. For example, many children indicated that they would like to be Inspector Gadget, John Farnham, Kylie Mole, Penny on **Inspector Gadget**, McGyver, Fat Cat etc., indicating that even though they were aware that cartoon characters were not real people, they would still like to be that character - no doubt because of the adventurous life and the magical skills the heros and heroines have on television. The final question, asking children what type of program they like to watch on television (happy, sad, funny, violent program) revealed that of the 276 children who responded to this question, 39.9% indicated that they liked to see a funny television program, compared with 6.5 % who indicated that they liked to see programs with fighting content; 2.2% of children who said they liked to see sad programs; 16.7% who indicated that they liked to see frightening television programs and 34.8% of children who said they liked to see happy television programs. A cross-tabulation of children's program choice, controlling for gender differences, indicated that girls liked funny and happy programs, and to a much lesser degree liked frightening programs, compared with boys who liked funny programs, followed by frightening programs, and happy programs, and programs containing fighting. A chi square indicated that the difference was highly significant ($X2 = 42.406$ df=4 $p < .001$).

8. PERSONAL OPINIONS REGARDING THE PERCEIVED NEED FOR MEDIA EDUCATION FOR INFANT CHILDREN

Proposition 6.1

This section of the parent and teacher questionnaire sought to determine the personal opinions of respondents regarding the need for media education for infant children. The first question asked parents and teachers whether they personally believed that media education was necessary for young children (four-to-eight year old). According to the results, of 120 parents who responded to this question an overwhelming majority (90.8%) indicated that they believed that media education was necessary for young (four-to-eight year old) children, compared with 9.2% of parents who expressed the view that media education was not necessary for such children. Similarly, of the 116 teachers who responded to this question, the vast majority (85.7%) thought media education was necessary for young children, and only 14.3% disagreed.

Proposition 6.2

Based on the assumption that many people would indicate that media education was necessary for infant children, the following question asked the respondent to indicate by whom media education should be taught. The majority of parents and teachers responding to this question, indicated that both parents and teachers (schools) should teach infant children about the media. For example, of the 109 parents responding to the question, 85.3% indicated that both the school and parents should be responsible for media education, compared with 11.9% of parents who believed that parents only should be responsible for media education. Only one parent believed that media education should be the sole responsibility of the school. The two remaining parents (1.8%) indicated that some other persons should be responsible for media education (e.g. church or television stations).

Similarly, 96.3% of all teachers responding to the question (n=109) indicated that both parents and schools should be responsible for media education of infant children, compared to 3.7% of teachers who believed that parents should be responsible for media education. No teachers indicated that media education should be the sole responsibility of the school.

Proposition 6.3

In relation to the teaching of media education at the school level, infant teachers were asked whether they thought they had appropriate training and skills to teach mass media education to infants. From the total of 122 teachers who responded to this question, one-third (33.6%) thought they had the appropriate skills, while 38.5% felt that they did not. Over one quarter of the teachers (27.9%) did not know whether they had the appropriate skills.

Cross-tabulations of each of the above questions indicated that there were minimal differences between teachers' responses, when controlling for type of school (State and independent non-Catholic only - as there was only one respondent from a Catholic school); similarly, cross-tabulations of parental responses to the above questions revealed no differences between responses when controlling for children's gender differences, age differences and area differences (urban/rural).

Proposition 6.4

Respondents (parents and teachers) who indicated that there was a need for media education were subsequently asked to select and rate five media topics (from a prescribed list of eight), according to what they believed were 'priority' areas for media education for infant children. Tables 6.30 and 6.31 list in rank order the topics selected as priority areas for media education for infant children.

TABLE 6.30: Number of parents selecting specified areas as priority areas for teaching media education to infant children (n=99).

RANK ORDER	PRIORITY AREA	n=
1	Fact and fantasy in the media	62
2	Purpose of the media	17
3	Influence of the media	10
4	Advertising in the media	5
5	Evaluation of the media	5

Table 6.30 provides interesting data regarding parents' attitudes to priority areas for media education for infant children. Of particular interest is the fact that 'fact and fantasy in the media' is considered by parents to be top priority for media education and these results are duplicated in Table 6.31 below which similarly indicates that teachers perceive this to be the number one priority area. To a large degree, parent and teacher ratings agree, though with some variations on the last three priority areas.

TABLE 6.31: Number of teachers selecting specified areas as priority areas for teaching media education to infant children (n=91).

RANK ORDER	PRIORITY AREA	n=
1	Fact and fantasy in the media	56
2	Purpose of the media	13
3	Advertising in the media	9
4	Evaluation of the media	8
5	Influence of the media	5

Respondents were then asked to indicate why they chose such activities as being important to media education for infants and, on this occasion, were left space for comments. The majority of responses from both parents and teachers illustrated the need for children to recognize the difference between fact and fantasy in the media, and included comments such as:

> *This is necessary to maintain the division in children's minds between reality and fantasy at an age where the dividing line can be very fine, especially when the child has an extremely active imagination eg. Any questions are answered honestly and in such a way as to enhance the child's understanding of the difference between fact and fantasy* (parent of five year old girl, Hobart).
>
> *Children need to know that stories on TV are not real and cannot hurt them. It is important to know what is reality* (parent of five year old boy, Sandy Bay).
>
> *Fantasy is often perceived as being fact on TV, although a belief in 'fantasy' is important they must learn not to accept everything. The segment on Play School showing TV tricks is a good example of suitable ways of illustrating the difference between fact and fantasy* (parent of eight year old boy, Tarraleah)
>
> *To help children distinguish between fact and fantasy so they don't take unnecessary risks. Activities might include: role playing - realistic situations; fantasy, then discussing outcomes* (teacher of prep/1 rural state school).
>
> *Young children are still coming to terms with reality. They have heightened imaginations. Other media such as the printed word can be readily shared and explained. The TV or video often isn't, so my first two priorities would be to help de-mythologise fantasy thus portrayed* (teacher of grade 2 independent non Catholic school, Hobart).

Comments by parents and teachers on 'the purpose of the media' highlighted the need for children to be educated about the multi-purpose nature of television. For example, an urban state school teacher said:

> *Children need to clarify the purpose of watching television - to be entertained, to learn, to prevent boredom and pass the time, to participate in an activity. Putting it into words makes the decision easier to deal with ... Learn the purpose of advertising, ie. persuasion - practise it, so you can recognize when persuasion is being used on you.*
>
> *I feel it is important for children to understand the various types of media and be able to acquire some objective approach to choosing what they want to look/listen to, and when* (parent of five year old girl, Savage River).

> *That media is for entertainment and education - not to be frightened or to watch programmes for the sake of watching or because others watch a certain programme. eg. To keep TV/video watching in perspective with other activities such as playing eg. restricted viewing times* (parent of five year old girl, North Hobart).

Both parents and teachers indicated that there was a need to educate children about the influence of the media both because of the media's ability to distort information and because of the audience's capacity to misunderstand or be influenced by the media. For example a Rosetta father of a five year old girl acknowledged the need for:

> *Appreciation that not all that is reported is as it may appear i.e. ulterior motivations.*

Similarly, a Taroona mother of a six year old girl highlighted the media's power and influence:

> *Children need to understand what the media says may not be correct or more importantly that the media often presents only one point of view, and there may be many others which are equally correct/interesting/exciting etc.*

And similarly, a rural grade 1/2 state school teacher highlighted the influence of the media from the audience's point of view, saying that it is:

> *Important that they* (children) *know about role of media and in what ways people are influenced by it. Talk about different programmes and their effects.*

Parents' and teachers' responses regarding why they felt there was a need to educate children about advertising showed that both groups felt children needed to be aware of the nature and aims of advertising, with some respondents noting the attributes of advertising. For example, a rural parent of a seven year old girl said:

> *Show how the media can glamorise the unglamorous through advertising e.g. cigarette smoking and alcohol. Also the importance of advertising in keeping people informed of the latest products and events.*

A Mt. Nelson parent of a six year old girl said:

> *Understand how people can buy things, see bargains or choose clothes.*

Infant teachers suggested that children should:

> *Learn to judge advertised products on merit. Look at them critically and encourage children to make educated decisions. Look at some toys - do they fall apart. Can you play more than one game with them? What are the unadvertised alternatives?* (urban kindergarten teacher).
>
> *It is important that children realise that not all that they hear in advertisements is right. They should investigate products for themselves* (urban grade 1/2 state school teacher).

Finally, parental responses regarding the necessity for children to evaluate the media highlighted the need for children to learn to assess the suitability and appropriateness of television programs for their use. Parents and teachers made general statements which can be summed up by a prep state school teacher, who said:

> *Making children aware that not all tv/video programs are designed for their viewing and why this is so. Talk about other activities than can be done instead.*

Proposition 6.5

In order to determine teacher and parental opinions regarding the media areas (television, video, cinema, radio, newspapers, etc.) to be included in media education activities for infant children, they were asked to indicate the teaching/learning coverage area which they believed to be important for the age group in question. Two-thirds of the parental respondents (66.4%) believed that media education for infant children should cover all the mass media (e.g. television, video, cinema, radio, newspapers, etc); a further 26.6% of parents indicated that media education in the infant school should cover television and video only, and 6.1% indicated that media education should cover television only. One parent thought mass media education for infant children should cover something other than these areas, but failed to specify what.

In comparison, 53% of teachers indicated that mass media education in the infant school should cover all of the mass media areas, while 38.3% believed that it should cover television and video only, and 7.9% believed it should cover television only. Again, one teacher indicated that something other than the listed areas should be taught for media education, but did not indicate the area.

Infant teachers were asked whether they had offered media education in the last year to their class, and of the 122 teachers who responded to this question, one quarter (25.4%) indicated that they had taught media education. Of these 31 teachers, most indicated that they had taught media education 'incidentally' and not as part of any planned curriculum,

although several teachers indicated that they had planned activities and themes for children to learn about the media. For example, a grade 1/2 teacher at a suburban state school said she had taught children about newspapers by having them make their own class newspaper and by inviting journalists to school to discuss their work. A grade 2 teacher at a city Catholic school indicated that the topic of communication was covered during social studies, in which areas such as television and newspaper were studied. The children visited a television studio as part of the education process. A grade 2 non-Catholic independent school teacher similarly indicated that she offered media education to her students, in which topics such as reality and fantasy, the effects of advertising, and television viewing hours were studied. Students were asked to graph their television viewing hours over a one week period.

The final part of the parent and teacher questionnaire asked the respondents to add any other information about media education or children's experiences with the media, if they wished. Many teachers and parents accepted the invitation and provided examples of children's imitative behaviour as a result of media exposure. For example, one parent reported that her six year old child broke her leg after she jumped from the garage roof with an umbrella after watching **Mary Poppins**. Other parents used the space to report that they supervised their children's television viewing, while others thought there were insufficient quality programs for young children on television. Several parents expressed their concern about the level of violence on television and in the media, and several teachers similarly expressed concern about infant children being allowed to watch violence on television. Both parents and teachers expressed the need for parents as well as children to be educated about the media and its effects, and two respondents suggested that schools might make workshops about the media available to parents as part of media education.

Finally, one kindergarten rural state school teacher indicated that the very existence of *media education in schools at the moment is hampered by the lack of knowledge of teachers and lack of suitable equipment. Children are exposed to so much TV and video, it seems ridiculous that they (and the adults responsible for them) have so few skills to properly interpret and evaluate what they see. Another impediment to infant children's understanding of TV and video is that very little is specifically designed with their needs in mind.*

Chapter 7

Analysis of Child Observations

Any attempt to study society must begin with observation
Grebenik E. and C. A. Moser in Society: Psychological Problems and Methods of Study, 1962, p. 54.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyse the observational data regarding the way in which infant children watch and react to television and video material. The objective of this part of the study was to observe the children's television and video viewing behaviour *in vivo* (within the natural home environment) during normal viewing times in an attempt to achieve an improved understanding of how children interact with the media. Even though this part of the study had a focus - that is, it was designed to look at children's fear reactions and children's imitative behaviour whilst viewing television - the observations were recorded in their complete form, so that they could be analysed according to appropriate categories at a later stage.

This chapter is divided into six sections. They are: (1) observational participants; (2) the observational procedure; (3) method of recording observational data; (4) the target behaviours under investigation; (5) analysis of child observations; and (6) synthesis of findings.

(1) Observational participants

As previously mentioned (chapter 5, section 15.1) ten parents agreed to have their children monitored for this part of the study. To retain the children's anonymity, false names have been used.

The observations were carried out during October and November 1989. All ten children had previously taken part in the child-interviews and had completed the media education activities in their schools. The reasons the observations were conducted following these parts of the research were: (a) children were then acquainted with the researcher; and (b) it was hoped that by implementing the child observations after the media activities, it might be possible to evaluate whether children had learned to cope with frightening characters as a result of the media education program.

(2) The observational procedure

Each child was observed over two evenings in their own home. On the first day the children were observed viewing their normal television programs. On the second day a videotape of either **The Never Ending Story** or **The Labyrinth** was shown (see Methodology chapter for an outline of the videos). From a brief verbal description of the two videos, children were asked to choose the video they preferred to view. The researcher had previously ascertained whether the children had viewed either of the videos. If children had previously viewed **The Labyrinth**, they were encouraged to view **The Never Ending Story**. In one instance a child had viewed both videos, though some years previously. The videos were still used with the child because it was believed that the research might reveal information about children's anticipatory effects, i.e. that the child might react fearfully even before a threatening scene appeared because he was able to predict what was about to happen. In this sense, the video observation would not only provide important insights into children's fear reactions to new information, but also children's fear reactions to known information. It was envisaged that the additional variable enhanced rather than hindered the observational methodology.

In the days prior to the observations the researcher contacted the parents to find out information regarding children's television viewing times, home video facilities and whether children had viewed either of the two videos. A time was made for the observations to take place during the children's normal television viewing hours.

Other members of the family were present in the house during these sessions, although they were not always present in the television viewing room. The researcher remained in the room with each child during the observations. During this time the researcher observed the children under observation and took notes. Children were aware that they were being videotaped although they were unaware that the researcher was making notes about their behaviour and their comments. The researcher had previously told the

children they she had some 'work' to do and that she would not disturb their television viewing.

It is likely that the presence of the researcher affected the behaviour of the children under observation. However any effect is likely to have been a positive one since the presence of a researcher is more likely to reduce children's fear responses rather than increase them. The researcher may have been reducing, rather than contributing to, the fear responses. This assumption was based on the view that children usually try to impress a visitor and so would try not to cry or make a scene. Therefore, in the present research, observer effects were not likely to increase the behaviour under observation.

(3) Method of recording observational data

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, data was recorded using two methods: (a) time-recorded handwritten notes; and (b) video camera recording of expressions and behaviour; the video camera was placed directly beside the television set and the lens was aimed directly at the child under observation. Two methods of recording data were chosen in an attempt to obtain all verbal comments and behaviour for later analysis.

(4) The target behaviours under investigation

The focus or target behaviours under investigation in the child observations were determined by several questions linked to the earlier questionnaire and interview findings: *Do children interact with the media? Do children imitate the media? What type of television content increases the viewing intensity? What other activities do children participate in while viewing television? Are infant children frightened by media contents and if so what type of media contents frighten children?* Therefore, for analytical purposes, the target behaviours selected were: (a) para-social and social interaction; (b) imitation of television model's language or behaviour; para-social and social interaction; (c) intensity of viewing; (d) other activities; and (e) media-induced fear. The five above-mentioned target behaviours provided a framework for analysis of observational behaviour, and were based on the observational research by Palmer (1986). These behaviours are defined below:

(a) para-social and social interaction

The term 'para-social interaction' is used here in the same sense as it was used by Horton and Wohl (1956, p. 215): *the simulacrum of conversational give and take* between the spectator or audience, and the performer. The viewer participates in a

discussion with the television performer by responding to questions and comments made by the performer. The conversation is a representation of what might occur in reality. The term 'para-social interaction' also reflects the broader definition used by Palmer (1986, p. 71) to include *conversations which are not necessarily to a person but may be a response to the way a television program is structured.*

Para-social interaction is measured by the amount and type of a viewer's comments in response to a television performer's statements, whereas social interaction is measured by the viewer's responses to other people in the home environment, such as a parent, the researcher etc.

(b) imitation of television models' language or behaviour

In the questionnaire children were asked to report whether they imitated people in the media. From the results it was found that many of the children sang songs or jingles from advertisements on television. The home observational situation provided the researcher with an opportunity to observe whether such behaviour occurred at the time of viewing.

Imitation was measured by observing instances of imitative behaviour or language.

(c) Intensity of viewing

It was assumed that children who viewed television intensely might react more fearfully to television contents than less intent viewers because they were more involved in the story. The observational situation enabled the researcher to observe intense viewing which was identified and measured by the following behaviour (a) fixed visual and auditory attention to the television screen, (b) usually accompanied by no movement of the body, (c) no discussion, and (d) inability to be distracted by surrounding events. When occurring simultaneously, these four behaviours constituted intense viewing.

(d) Other activities

Other activities refer to any other activities undertaken by the children during television and video viewing. Such activities include reading, drawing, playing games, eating etc.

(e) Media-induced fear

The main purpose of the observations was to identify events which frightened children and to examine how children reacted to frightening media contents in their normal home environment. Fear was measured by (a) children's self-reports of fear, (b) overt behavioural signs such as crying, leaving the room, hiding behind furniture, moving away from television screen, hugging knees to chest - creating a barrier between television screen and self, - etc.

(5) Analysis of Child Observations

The following child observational analyses refer to ten children aged between five and eight years, who had participated in the interviews and the media education trial curriculum.

Child Observation 1: Michael (12 and 13 October, 1989)

PROFILE: Michael was seven years old and was in year 2 at an independent non-Catholic school. He was the fourth child in a family of seven. In terms of fear arousal Michael's mother rated him as '0' - indicating that he was not afraid of anything - on a scale of 1-5. From a list of fourteen potentially fear-evoking excitants, Michael's mother indicated that he was frightened of the dark; was hesitant with dogs and other animals; and had asked questions about death, but had not shown fear of death. According to Michael's mother, he watches television for approximately one hour per day.

(i) General comments

During the observational period, Michael viewed regular television programs with his four year old sister and younger baby sister. During the first day of observation, the children viewed television programs on the ABC (**Gumby, Superted** and **Count Duckula**). On the second day (video observation), Michael chose to watch **The Never Ending Story**. According to Michael and his mother, he had viewed both of the offered videos previously, but a long time ago and he indicated that he could not remember either of them very clearly.

(ii) para-social and social interaction

Michael engaged in little para-social interaction during the cartoon television programs (**Gumby, Count Duckula**). Examples of Michael's para-social interactions follow (expressed in italics) together with the television content examples.

Television content:	Gumby dropped something and it fell down a hole.
Michael:	*Ah* (looking at the television screen)

During the video **The Never Ending Story**, Michael's para-social interaction was increased, as is evident from the comments below.

Video content:	Strange animal creatures appear on the screen.
Michael:	*Oh my God!* (looking at the screen, but putting his hands up to his face).
Video content:	Huge talking mountain/rock (rock-biter) appears on the screen.
Michael:	*Gees!*
Video content:	The boy rides the horse through the swamp.
Michael:	*Oh yuk!*

Michael participated in considerable social interaction, ranging from comments about television contents, to discussions about events not related to the television programs. These interactions were generally with his younger sister, although he also engaged in conversations with his mother. On the first day of the observation, Michael engaged in television-oriented discussions with his sister, as well as non-television-oriented discussions, examples of which are as follows:

Television content:	**Superted** titles and song
Michael:	*Superted's on now* (to his sister).
Television content:	Nanny (**Count Duckula's** nanny and housekeeper) is ill with a cold
Michael:	*Look at her nose, it's going to drip. Oh look at that* (to his sister)
Michael (to sister):	*I can count to 200,000* (in response to sister's statement that she could count to 6)

Michael (undirected comment): *Only eight weeks till Christmas.* (not in response to anything on television or any previous comments made by his sister or others).

In terms of video viewing, Michael participated in very few discussions, except when he and his sister were debating whether to watch the video or go outside and play. This occurred after approximately 30 minutes of video viewing. All other discussions were directed towards Michael's sister and were related to the video contents, and were generally in response to comments or questions made by his sister, rather than self-initiated discussions. For example:

Television content: The boy meets the non-human characters
Michael's sister: *This is the good part.*
Michael: *No, when it's night time, then it's the good part.*

Television content: Boy endeavouring to pull drowning horse from swamp
Michael's sister: *Where did all that mud come from?*
Michael: *Water. It comes from the creek.*

Before the completion of the video both children were distracted by voices outside, and had a discussion about whether to watch the video or go outside. Michael's sister indicated that she wanted to go outside, but not on her own. The discussion (and observation) ended when she persuaded Michael to stop watching the video and go out with her.

(iii) Imitation of television model's language or behaviour

Over the period of the two evenings, Michael *'acted out'* (Palmer's term used in reference to children performing television content while it is in progress) or imitated television content on one occasion only. This occurred during an advertisement for an ABC product (children's record), Michael and his sister sang the words to the song: *Bob the Kelpie,* and continued to sing the song after the song was finished on television. Both Michael and his sister obviously knew the words to the song and the accompanying tune. According to Palmer (1986, p. 72 - who refers to such behaviour as 'performance'), *a degree of familiarity is essential to 'performance'.*

On no other occasion, during either television or video viewing, did Michael or his younger sister imitate the television models' language or behaviour.

(iv) Intensity of viewing

There were few times of intense viewing during Michael's television and video observations. On the first day of the observations, Michael left the room four times in the first half hour. The few periods of intense viewing lasted only for a moment or two and usually these occurred when his sister was absent from the room. The nature of the television content (as well as the decrease in distractions) appeared to be associated with Michael's concentration. For example, intense viewing was always associated with adventure sequences on television (in which the sound was generally louder) as well as loud voices of characters. During such scenes - for example the boy talking loudly in **The Never Ending Story** and Superted flying off to rescue a character - Michael sat perfectly still on the floor, approximately 1 1/2 to 2 metres from the television screen, leaning on one arm, with his mouth slightly opened. It was during times of intense viewing that Michael watched television in closer proximity. Surrounding noise from the baby and his sister had no effect on his concentration during these periods.

(v) Other activities during television viewing

Michael engaged in few other activities whilst viewing television over the two day observation period. On the first night of observations, Michael had a drink while watching television and played with his baby sister (tickling her and blowing into a toy held out to him by the baby). He also chewed the toy given to him by his baby sister (a small plastic disk).

During the video viewing, Michael did not participate in any activities, other than putting his eye directly over the lens of the video camera at the beginning of the observation. This activity immediately followed a period of intense viewing (the boy on **Never Ending Story** talking very loudly).

With the exception of going to the kitchen to get a drink during the first day of observation, Michael's activities involved little physical activity.

(vi) Media-induced fear

The television observation on the first day indicated that Michael was not afraid of any of the contents of the television programs. On the second day of the observations, however, Michael's behaviour indicated fear or disgust of characters in the video, as illustrated by the observation below:

Television content:	Strange characters appear on the screen (non-human type)
Michael:	*Oh I hate this part* (moving back from the television screen)
Michael's sister:	If you're scared then you won't get to see it Michael.
Michael:	(continues watching intently) *Oh my God!*

Television content:	Boy riding horse through the swamp, but the horse is bogged
down	in the mud and cannot get free.
Michael:	*It's scary this part, I don't like watching it. Oh. yuk.*

As noted in the first example (above) Michael distanced himself from the television during a frightening scene. According to Lewis and Michalson (1983, p. 241) and Bull (1983, p. 50) such behaviour may be attributed to children's fear. Lewis and Michalson indicate in the following statement that withdrawal behaviour can be used as a criterion of fear: *When children run away from a stranger and hide behind their mother neither facial nor physiological responses can be used to attribute fear, but the locomotive cue is quite sufficient.*

In terms of fear arousal, Michael's level of fear would be rated as *mild* (as defined earlier - the child would appear to be frightened, may or may not report the fear to another person; would continue to watch the program without becoming upset). His sister indicated no fear at all of the characters or events in the video.

Child Observation 2: Norman (16 and 23 October, 1989)

PROFILE: Norman was six years old and was the eldest of three children. He attended a suburban state school and was in grade 1. According to his mother, Norman was a fearful child, being frightened of many things. For example, his mother indicated that he was frightened of darkness, strangers, spiders, dogs or other animals, frightening faces on television, frightening stories in books, going to school (in the words of Norman: "yes, because I really hated it. I had this feeling, like excited but I really didn't like it"), death of self or family member (his younger brother had died as a result of choking on food), injury of self or family member, and rough play (e.g. someone throwing him into the air). Norman and his mother indicated that he was not, and had never been afraid of bright lights, loud noises, imaginary monsters/witches/ghosts or being abandoned. Norman views television for approximately 1 1/2 to 2 hours per day, according to his mother.

(i) General comments

During the observational period, Norman viewed television programs with his four year old sister and baby brother. During the first day of observation, the children viewed television programs on the ABC (**Gumby, Superted** and **Count Duckula**). On the second day, Norman chose to watch **The Labyrinth.**

Norman watched television from a rocking chair which was approximately three metres from the television screen. His sister was outstretched on the floor, approximately two metres from the television screen. The baby played in the background and did not watch television, except for glimpses now and then.

(ii) para-social and social interaction

Norman engaged in limited para-social interaction during the first day of observation. His behaviour was similar to Michael's in that his interaction was in the form of short comments or statements. For example:

Television content: Gumby lands in the desert and begins to melt because it is so hot.
Norman: *Oh! oh! he's melting. Oh I knew he looks like* ... (undirected comment).

Television content: Tex is stealing something.
Norman: *Oh! Oh!* (undirected comment).

During the television programs, Norman did not communicate with others around him very often and when he did the comments were brief, and usually related to the television content at the time. His sister exhibited the same type of behaviour. The following comment was typical of the few communications between the two children during the television viewing period:

Television content: Gumby is clinging on to windmill blades which are spinning around, getting faster and faster.
Norman's sister: *That looks like fun.*

Norman: *Yes.*

The amount of comments increased considerably, however, when Norman viewed the video. During the video observation, Norman engaged in discussion with his mother, his sister and the experimenter, and such comments were always about the video content. For example:

Television content: Goblins appear on the screen while Sarah is wishing that they (the goblins) would take her baby brother away.

Norman: *I'm feeling a bit frightened* (directed at the researcher).

Television content: Goblins take the baby, thunderstorm in the background, window bangs open, and Sarah is in the house on her own and discovers that the baby has disappeared.

Norman: *I tell you this is not a kids' movie.*
I can't stand this, I can't stand this (directed at his mother as he runs from the room).

Television content: Sarah encounters Huggle (a grotesque looking goblin) in the Labyrinth.

Norman: *Would you like to switch this off and come and watch Gumby?* (he says to his sister).

Norman made numerous comments of this kind throughout the video, as he wandered in and out of the room. Almost every comment emphasised the dislike for the video contents and the desire to turn the video off. His younger sister, who did not appear to be distressed by the film, similarly made comments, but these were generally related to the welfare of the baby character in the video, as indicated in the following examples:

Television content: The goblin king has the baby in his castle, throwing him from goblin to goblin, saying that in a few hours, the child will be 'goblinized', and will be one of them.

Norman's sister: *I bet the baby's sad. I bet someone pinched him. I bet someone pinched him. I bet someone pinched him* (directed at Norman).

Television content: Sarah rescues her baby brother from the goblin king and is in his bedroom back at their home.

Norman's sister: *I bet that baby was just dreaming* (not directed at any person in particular).

(iii) Imitation of television content

During the days of the observations, Norman imitated only one item from television. The imitative behaviour occurred immediately following the segment in **Count Duckula**, in which Count Duckula says *that's green, that's red.* Norman responded with *that's green, that's red* immediately afterwards. During the video observation Norman's sister imitated the behaviour of Ludo, one of the friendly animal characters in **The Labyrinth**. For example, when Ludo said *no* in response to a question from Sarah, Norman's sister shook her head from side to side, gesturing a 'no' response as well. In relation to interpersonal behaviour in social interactions, Argyle (1967, p. 54) says that people imitate styles of behaviour spontaneously as a form of reinforcement. Furthermore, such 'response matching' may be used deliberately to help calm a person who is anxious, according to Argyle and Trower (1979, p. 30).

(iv) Intensity of viewing

Norman viewed the television programs much more intently than the video program, probably because he was not afraid of the television programs, whereas he spent most of his video viewing time trying to avoid the video contents. During times of intense viewing, Norman sat motionless in the rocking chair. The majority of the time was spent however, rocking back and forth in the chair for brief periods at a time. This behaviour usually occurred at the end of programs when the credits appeared on the screen. The increased activity may have been related to his anticipation of a forthcoming program and/or his boredom with the credits or just a release of tension.

(v) Other activities during television viewing

During the first observation, Norman did not participate in any other activities while viewing television, although his younger sister did. For example, during **Count Duckula** Norman's sister entered the room 'riding a cloth horse'. She looked for cushions, then looked for a moment at the television and then left the room. Two minutes later she returned with a balloon. Her play during this program was the main activity and the television viewing was a secondary activity in that she spent the majority of her time playing (away from the television). Palmer (1986, p. 63) similarly noted that children participate in other activities while viewing television. In her study of eight to twelve year old children, Palmer identified over fifteen different types of activities (e.g. eat a snack, do homework, draw) in which children engaged while viewing television.

On the second observation, Norman attempted to 'escape' from the video by participating in other activities, such as playing the piano loudly, stamping his feet. This behaviour however could not be considered as play, and according to self-reports and behavioural analysis was the result of fear.

(v) Media induced fear

[NOTE: It should be pointed out that it soon became apparent that Norman was frightened of the video contents. It was also obvious that his reaction was stressful and unpleasant. Being aware of this situation, the researcher indicated to the mother that she could turn the television off at any time. The parent declined because the younger child wanted to view the program. Although the researcher felt guilty about inflicting the video contents on the child, the research continued. At the conclusion of the video the researcher spent considerable time discussing the video contents and special effects photography with Norman to help him understand how the characters were created and to reassure him that the events were completely fictitious. A follow-up telephone call to Norman's mother indicated that he had not experienced bad dreams or nightmares as a result of the video.]

Norman was not frightened by the television contents during the first day of observation, but he was extremely frightened during the screening of **The Labyrinth** on the second day of the observations. There was considerable evidence of media-induced fear, through observation of behaviour as well as child self-reports of fear. For example, during the video screening, Norman left the television room on numerous occasions (verbally reporting that he was frightened) as the following illustrates:

Television content:	Sarah enters the labyrinth, a goblin creature has his back turned, while he urinates into a fountain. As he turns around his grotesque face can be seen.
Norman:	*Uh oh!* (runs from the room)

Three minutes later Norman returned to his chair with a green security blanket, covering the lower part of his face, but had his eyes peeping out over the top of the blanket. When the action on the video was replaced by a song, Norman removed the blanket from his face, and sucked on one finger, and rocked the chair gently back and forth. A few minutes later however, when the character in the story falls through a trapdoor into the 'talking hands', Norman ran from the room once again, this time indicating that he would like the television off. This behaviour was repeated throughout the video, but at

times Norman was more upset than others. For example, after seeing the talking hands, Norman crouched in the middle of the kitchen floor with the blanket over his head, crying, and pleading with his mother to turn the video off. At other times Norman peeped at the television screen from the doorway and on some occasions (particularly when there was music on the video) he edged his way back to his chair - but generally sat on the edge in a tense pose.

During one part of the video (the introduction of Ludo - a large animal-type creature who was hanging upside down growling loudly whilst being beaten by a band of warriors), Norman retreated to his room crying. This behaviour was followed by loud stamping (to drown out the noise of the video) and shortly after was followed by loud, fast playing on the piano. The fear experienced by Norman is evidenced by his repeated requests to his sister to turn off the video, crying, as well as his avoidance or withdrawal behaviour. Referring to avoidance behaviour, Agras (1985, p. 63) says that fear leads to the withdrawal of the whole organism from the situation, as opposed to pain, which leads to reflexive withdrawal of the affected part. In other words, Norman withdrew totally from the fear stimulus in order to avoid the fear experience.

At the conclusion of the video, Norman's responses to the questionnaire confirmed his fear of the program contents. He indicated that in *no way* did he enjoy the video, and that it made him frightened. When asked which parts made him frightened, he indicated that *just about every part* made him frightened. The next question asked him to describe how he felt when he was frightened, to which he responded *I really, really felt I wanted to turn it off.* He indicated that when he is frightened of something he generally goes away. Norman said that he would not like to be any of the characters because *those things are sort of animals and those goblins are ugly. And the man turned into an owl. I didn't want to do that.*

In terms of fear arousal, Norman would have experienced level 3-4 fear as a result of viewing **The Labyrinth.**

Child Observation 3: Jillian (17 and 20 October, 1989)

PROFILE: Jillian was the younger child in a family of two. She was seven years of age and attended a suburban state school, at which she was in grade 1. According to her mother, Jillian had been frightened of darkness, loud noises, spiders (very frightened), dogs or other animals, frightening faces on television, frightening stories in books, imaginary monsters/witches/ghosts, injury of self or family member, and of being abandoned. On a scale of 0-5,

her mother indicated that Jillian would rate as 3 1/2 to 4 in terms of fear arousal.

Jillian normally watched television with her older brother,but during the observations her brother was playing with friends and did not watch television. On both evenings Jillian's father stayed with her while she viewed television. He read a book during this period.

According to parental reports, Jillian watched television for approximately two hours per day, and on some occasions she watched television in the morning before school.

(i) General comments

Jillian sat approximately three metres away from the television screen on a couch. The programs that she watched during the first observational session were **Gumby** and **Superted** and then, because there were no other programs that interested her she watched a video called **The Chipmunks**. According to Jillian she had watched this video several times before. On day two - the video observation - Jillian chose to watch **The Labyrinth.**

(ii) Para-social and social interaction

All the comments made by Jillian, at both observations (television and video), were directed towards other people in the room (either her father or the researcher). With the exception of one comment, all statements were in relation to the contents of the video or television programs. For example:

Television content:	During the Chipmunks video, some cartoon penguin characters are dancing.
Jillian:	*My favourite part is the penguin part. These girls take it back to Antarctica* (directed at the researcher).
Television content:	Singing chipmunks.
Jillian:	*They've all got the same voice when they sing, to me. Now it's another one singing* (directed at the researcher).
Television content:	Chipmunks singing a sad song about mothers.

Jillian: *One morning I nearly cried on that part* (directed at the researcher).

Only one comment referred to a non-television event: while watching the video **(Chipmunks)** and fiddling with her watch, she said: *I got a new watch today* (directed at the researcher).

(iii) Imitation of television

At no time during either observation (television program or video) did Jillian imitate the words or actions of the characters on television.

(iv) Intensity of viewing

Compared with the earlier two child observations, Jillian watched television intensely, only looking away to smile or talk to the researcher. Even though she fiddled with her watch, and her hair and moved her legs about, her eyes remained on the television almost all the time. As Palmer (1986, p. 78) found in her observations of eight-to-twelve year old children, intense viewing was often accompanied by slight movements of the hands or feet, and fiddling with hair, which was typical of Jillian's behaviour.

(v) Other activities

Though Jillian was given two soft toys (fluffy dog and a rag doll) by her mother while she was viewing the video **The Labyrinth**, she never played with the toys at all during the observation.

(vi) Media induced fear:

During the observation on day one, Jillian almost continually engaged in 'fiddling' behaviour (e.g. playing with watch on her arm) as well as behaviour such as rocking her legs back and forth, putting her legs up on the lounge, tapping her feet on the floor, scratching her body, or stroking her hair. During the second observation, this behaviour continued, although it decreased in intensity and there was variation in some of the body positions. For example, during the first observation, Jillian often put her legs up on the couch (in a sitting position with legs curled around to one side of her

body); but on the second day of observations she tucked her legs close to her body, and hugged them with both arms. When watching the scene where Huggle was killing the fairies, Jillian put both knees up and wrapped her arms around her legs. During these scenes she sat perfectly still, watching intently. As Sarah entered the door to the labyrinth, Jillian put her knees closer to her body, and put her chin on her knees, watching intently all the while.

This behaviour may be the result of fear, according to the interpretations of body language presented by Pease (1981, p. 96), who suggests that the full arm cross gesture is a sign of fear and the use of a barrier was interpreted as a method of gaining security (p. 98).

During the video observation, rather than scratching or touching, Jillian bit her fingernails (when Sarah was in danger of falling into the bog of eternal stench), bit her finger (when Sarah's house was falling in all around her and also when Sarah saw her baby brother at the goblin castle). According to Argyle (1967, p. 35) such gestures reflect emotional states. He says:

> *When a person is emotionally aroused he produces diffuse, apparently pointless, bodily movements. People often touch themselves during certain emotions - fist-clenching (aggression), face-touching (anxiety), scratching (self-blame), forehead-wiping (tiredness) etc.*

Similarly, Pease (1981, p. 76) noted that fingers in the mouth indicated that a person was under pressure. He says of the behaviour:

> *It is an unconscious attempt by the person to revert to the security of the child sucking on his mother's breast. The young child substitutes his thumb for the breast and as an adult, he not only puts his fingers to his mouth but inserts such things as cigarettes, pipes, pens and the like into it. Whereas most hand-to-mouth gestures involve lying or deception, the fingers-in-the-mouth gesture is an outward manifestation of an inner need for reassurance.*

At the conclusion of the video, Jillian indicated that she was not frightened of the program contents. She said that she enjoyed the program, particularly when Sarah celebrated in her room at the end of the film (Sarah was safely back at home with her baby brother, and the friendly goblins were there too, saying goodbye and dancing to the music). She indicated also that she enjoyed the part of the video when Sarah was reading from the book. This occurred at the very beginning opening scenes of the video, before the goblins appeared. Jillian reported that she would like to be Sarah, the baby, Ludo, or the girl's dog - thus preferring to be the characters displaying prosocial behaviour.

Child Observation 4: Karen (24 and 27 October, 1989)

PROFILE: Karen was seven years of age and was the youngest of three in her family, having an older sister and brother. She attended a nearby suburban state school and was in grade 2. In terms of fear arousal, Karen's mother indicated that Karen was not frightened by many things. Her mother said that for a short while Karen was afraid of darkness, but was not afraid at the moment. However, she was afraid of spiders, dogs or other animals, frightening faces on television and has also indicated according to her mother, that she was frightened of the death of self or family members. On a scale of 0-5, Karen's mother rated her as 1 in terms of fear arousal. Her mother reported that Karen often had bad dreams, although she could not recall whether they were related to the fears reported earlier.

Karen watched television for approximately three hours per day. In the semi-industrial neighbourhood where Karen lives, there is little space for her to play. The family welding business operates from the home, and the entire back yard area is occupied by the business. The small front yard area is used for off-street car parking.

(i) General comments

Karen sat on the floor approximately one and a half to two metres from the television screen, with her feet outstretched in front of her. The size of the television screen was approximately 48 centimetres. During the television observation (day one) Karen watched **Sesame Street, Play School** and **Blinky Bill.** On the second day of observation (video observation), she chose to view **The Labyrinth.**

(ii) Para-social and social interaction

On the first day of observations, Karen watched the television programs on her own and made no verbal comments whatsoever during **Sesame Street, Play School** or **Blinky Bill.** On the second day of observations, interaction was limited to brief comments relating to the contents of the video program (**The Labyrinth**). For example:

Television content:	Sarah enters the labyrinth and a bunch of talking 'eyes' on long stems move about watching her.
Karen:	*Yuk!* (undirected comment).
Television content:	The red goblins toss their heads and other bodily parts (arms, eyes, legs) in the air to each other, while dancing.
Karen:	*Oh yuk!* (undirected comment)
Television content:	Sarah and Huggle fall down a shaft into a cliff above the bog of eternal stench and are overcome by the smell.
Karen:	*Oh yuk!* (pulling a face, undirected comment)

(iii) Imitation of television behaviour

Karen did not imitate any of the television programs (**Sesame Street, Play School** or **Blinky Bill**), although on the second day of observations, during the video, she imitated the actions of the head of the doorknocker. In the video, Sarah wanted to go through a door, but could not get through unless she knocked on the door (she had earlier pulled the ring out of the doorknocker's mouth). She asked the doorknocker to open his mouth so that she could put the ring back into his mouth. The doorknocker refused, so Sarah held his nose until he was forced to open his mouth to breathe. During this scene, Karen viewed intently and when the talking door knob opened its mouth widely for air, so too did Karen. She then sighed, sat back a little and continued to watch the video intently. It is likely that Karen's behaviour was subconscious and that she may have shared the emotions and sensations of the character (doorknocker), in much the same way as Adam (child observation 9, below).

(iv) Intensity of viewing

Although Karen moved her arms, legs and body about during the television and video watching, her eyes and concentration remained on the television almost all of the time. During periods of intense concentration, Karen remained perfectly still whilst watching the screen. On these occasions the scenes on television were generally exciting or frightening, such as the scene when Sarah moved towards the baby's cot and found that her baby brother had been taken by the goblins. During this scene, Karen sat perfectly still, without even chewing the apple she was eating. Similarly, two minutes later as the 'talking hands' talked to Sarah, Karen sat perfectly motionless.

On only one occasion was Karen's attention distracted from the television and that was when her older sister laughed. Karen turned around to see why her sister was laughing (the scene on television at the time was that of the old Gypsy woman talking to the girl in her bedroom asking her if she could remember what she was looking for). She turned back to the television after she observed her sister looking at photographs.

(v) Other activities

Karen fiddled with her shoes, ate an apple, wriggled her feet, but participated in no other activities whilst watching either the video or the television.

(vi) Media-induced fear

At the conclusion of the video (during the interview) Karen indicated that although she enjoyed the video, she was frightened by its contents. In particular, she was frightened of the *talking hands,* the bunch of *talking, wiggling eyes on stems*, and the *roaring sound of Ludo* (large animal). When these verbal reports of fear were cross-referenced with the observational report and video material, it was evident that on each occasion, behaviour similar to that experienced by Jillian was observed. For example, when the 'talking eyes' appeared on the screen, Karen responded with *Yuk,* and put her knees up to her chest, with her arms in a cuddling position around them. As mentioned earlier, this behaviour may indicate fear or the desire to create a barrier between the viewer and the fear-inducing stimulus. A short while later, when the 'talking hands' were on the screen, Karen watched intently, on this occasion with one knee placed up to her chest. During the third example of self-reported fear, Karen sat forward with her arms around her knees. Her eyes scanned the picture on the screen, no doubt trying to determine where the roaring noise of Ludo was coming from (he was not on the screen at that stage), and on seeing him she responded *Yuk.* During each of these occasions, Karen's attention was solely on the television contents.

On one other occasion (when Sarah was looking around her bedroom with the old Gypsy, trying to find out what she was looking for) Karen put her knees up to her chest and hugged them with her arms. During this time she wriggled her toes in an agitated manner, then she pulled her legs closer to her body, and watched intently as the girl smashed the mirror - shattering the hallucination which had been brought on by eating a poisoned peach, given to her by Huggle. Although Karen did not self-report fear of this segment, her behaviour indicates that she may have been frightened of the scene.

Child Observation 5: Greg (30 and 31 October, 1989)

PROFILE: Greg was five years of age and was the youngest in a family of three. He attended a suburban state school and was in Prep. According to Greg's mother, he has never really been frightened of anything, with the exception of death of himself or a family member, and of being abandoned. When asked to indicate his fear arousal on a scale of 0-5 however, his mother reported that he would probably be in the middle range of about 2 1/2.

Unlike the other children in the study, Greg was supervised at home by his father during the evening hours as his mother worked on some evenings. According to his parents, Greg liked to watch the commercial television station, and generally watched Neighbours on TAS-TV.

Greg usually watched television for approximately 2 hours per day, according to parental reports.

(i) General comments:

Greg sat on the lounge, approximately three to four metres from the television screen, although his mother said that he usually sat very close to the screen (on the floor). On the first day of observation he viewed television on his own. His father was in the kitchen nearby. Greg's mother left for work at approximately 6.00 p.m. on the first day, but was home with the family on the second day of observation. During the television observation Greg watched **Sale of the Century** and **Neighbours**. He chose **The Labyrinth** for the video observation.

(ii) Para-social and social interaction

On one occasion during the television observation, Greg engaged in para-social interaction with Tony Barber, the host of the television game show called **Sale of the Century**. Tony Barber said (just prior to a commercial break) *We'll be back before you can say .....* Greg immediately repeated the words that Tony Barber uttered, and said: *I've already said it* in a tone that implied that Tony Barber was wrong.

On another occasion, Greg interacted with the television contents:

Television content:	A road safety advertisement was on television
Greg:	(before the commentary is heard on television) ***Buckle them in firmly.***
Television content:	Illustration of the road safety logo, and the words 'Buckle them in firmly'.

Greg was obviously aware of the contents of the road safety advertisement, which enabled him to act out or perform the content before it occurred on the screen. In regard to advertisements and performance, Palmer (1986, p. 72) says that children *seemed to enjoy demonstrating their knowledge of programs and commercials by performing parts of them.* This seemed to be the case with Greg, who also sang along with the *Danino yoghurt advertisement.*

(iii) Imitation of television

Greg was able to imitate television content through being familiar with the contents of commercials, as was indicated in the previous section in reference to the *Danino advertisement* and the road safety advertisement.

(iv) Intensity of viewing

During the first night of observations, Greg did not view the television programs intensely, although he did pay attention to some of the advertisements. Throughout the television series **Neighbours,** he climbed on the chairs, stood on his head on the chairs, with his back to the television screen, turned a somersault, dangled between two chairs and swung his body back and forth, played with toys and left the room several times. His attention increased in intensity during the advertisements, although not for all advertisements. For example during an advertisement for 'Fitzgeralds department store', Greg was standing on his head in a chair, not watching the television screen at all; and similarly, during an advertisement for 'Toyota Corolla cars' he went to get a puppet. On the other hand, the advertisements for 'MacDonalds', 'Peters Drumstick ice cream', 'Pepsi', 'Aggro advertising Saturday morning cartoons', 'Coca Cola' and 'AMP' gained his full attention. In this sense Greg's television behaviour was that of intermittent intensity, which according to Palmer (1986, p. 81) may be as a result of 'anticipation restlessness': that is, the viewer's restless activity is bought about by the

anticipation of a meal, or another activity, and thus the child is unable to concentrate on viewing. It could be however that Greg was bored with the television contents.

During the video of **The Labyrinth** Greg's behaviour was considerably different (although it should be pointed out that his mother said he had come home early from school because he was ill). He sat quietly in a chair, with his head propped up by his hand which was resting on the arm of the chair. His feet were curled up to one side of his body.

Greg watched intently during the first 15 minutes of the video, after which he looked over at the researcher. (At this point of the video, Sarah was looking in the cot and found that her baby brother had been taken by goblins). The intense viewing continued, with little activity or movement, until Greg left the room in tears (after 30 minutes of video viewing). His mother indicated that he was not well and did not wish to continue watching the video.

(v) Other activities

Greg participated in numerous activities during his television viewing, which were not typical of the earlier reported child observations. For example, Greg's behaviour involved gross motor skills (climbing, standing in his head, swinging between chairs), rather than fine motor behaviour (fiddling with shoes, playing with hair). In addition to these activities, Greg also played with toys - a puppet and Lego - while **Neighbours** was on television. During his play with these toys he concentrated on the play rather than the television content, and as such was at least partially distracted. He also ate biscuits and sweets, but he did this while viewing, after leaving the room several times to replenish stocks of food. During these breaks to the kitchen for food, Greg sometimes conversed with his father.

(vi) Media-induced fear

Greg *may* have been afraid of the video content (he left the room crying, and did not want to continue watching the story) although his emotional state may have been the result of illness. Greg's mother asked him if he was frightened of the video, to which he replied *I feel sick.*

(The researcher left the video with the family, suggesting that Greg might like to view the video when he was feeling better. After several nights, the video was collected from the family and the video had not been viewed. The video was stopped at the

location when video observation ceased on an earlier evening. A telephone discussion with Greg's mother indicated that he may have been frightened by the contents of the video, but did not want to admit it - perhaps because of sex-role expectations).

6. Child Observation: Brenda (1 and 2 November, 1989)

PROFILE: Brenda was five years old and had a younger baby brother. She was in prep at an independent non-Catholic school. Brenda was not really afraid of anything, according to her mother, although she said that Brenda did not like spiders, and was frightened if she thought she might be abandoned (i.e. if mother said she was leaving). On a scale of 0-5, however, Brenda's mother rated her as 3.5 in terms of fear arousal.

Brenda watches television for approximately half an hour daily (consciously) and although television was on, she was not really watching it, according to her mother.

(i) General comments

Brenda sat on the lounge approximately four metres from the television screen during both days of observations. On the first day, she watched **Family Ties** and **Neighbours** on Tas-TV. On both occasions, Brenda watched television alone.

(ii) Para-social and social interaction

On the first day of observation Brenda made no comments relating to the television content. She responded to her brother's behaviour by accepting a bottle of juice that he offered her, saying *he wants me to drink it* (to the researcher). She returned the juice to him after having a drink, and then continued to watch **Neighbours** when the baby left the room. A few seconds later when the baby returned, Brenda discovered that he had a wet nappy, and removed it from him saying *Yuk!* Her verbal discussions throughout her television viewing were unrelated to television, and even though her mother and auntie were in the house, all interactions were with her younger brother.

During the screening of an advertisement for coat hangers, in which a voice informs the audience of the strength and versatility of the products, Brenda responded (to the researcher) *I don't think you could hang boats on it, 'cause you couldn't hang boats on it.* Brenda had misunderstood the fast-talking sales jargon.

(iii) Imitation of television model's language and behaviour

Brenda did not imitate any behaviour from television or video during either day of the observation.

(iv) Intensity of viewing

On the first night of television observation, Brenda viewed **Family Ties** and **Neighbours**, and during each program there were few examples of intense viewing. At times she watched television intensely, particularly during advertisements, and immediately following commercials when the program was returned to the screen. For example, advertisements for 'Stackhats', 'Danino yoghurt', 'Hanna Barbera videos','Peters Drumstick ice cream', 'Country Practise' advertisement, and 'Cadbury's Twirl chocolate bar' were all watched intently, with one advertisement being mentioned to the researcher (the coat-hanger advertisement mentioned above).

At other times during the the television programs - like the final scenes of **Neighbours** - Brenda played with her baby brother. For example, she held him by the waist and twirled him around, talked to him, changed his napkin, and looked out to the kitchen where the adults were preparing dinner. In this sense, Brenda's television viewing was partially distracted. The only scene from television which gained her total undivided attention, was a scene on **Neighbours** in which a woman answered the telephone and was threatened by the caller, who demanded $20,000 from her. During this time, Brenda sat perfectly still on the lounge, and did not remove her eyes from the television screen.

During the video (**The Labyrinth**) Brenda's viewing was more intent. Throughout the opening scenes, in which Sarah recited the poem from the book, Brenda stared intently at the television screen, making no movements at all, even though her baby brother played and chatted nearby. She watched the scenes without distraction (a total of five minutes) until the goblin faces appeared on the television screen, at which time she looked over at the researcher, smiled and slid down on the couch. Frowning slightly, she continued to view intently, and continued to view in this manner (intense viewing, followed by looking over at the researcher) until the video was stopped prematurely, at her request, after 30 minutes. This behaviour strongly indicates that

Brenda's behaviour was affected by the researcher's presence. If the researcher had not been present, it is most likely that the child would have turned the television off before this point. Brenda obviously continued to watch the video for as long as she could to avoid 'offending' the researcher - even though she had been told that she could turn the video off at any time.

(v) Other activities

During television program viewing Brenda participated in play activities with her brother and discussions with her brother, but did not eat, or play with toys while viewing.

(vi) Media-induced fear:

Brenda showed no fear arousal on the first day of observations, but on the second day of observation Brenda exhibited behaviour that indicated fear, as well as self-reporting fear to the researcher. It should be noted however that Brenda tried to conceal her fear from the researcher, which may be the result of conditioning. In addition to Brenda's self-reported fear, several behavioural indicators suggested that Brenda was frightened of the video contents, as can be seen from the following examples:

Television content:	Goblins appear on the television screen for the first time.
Brenda:	(looks towards researcher, faintly smiling, fiddles with hair, purses lips together when looking back at television). [The researcher noted at this point that she looked frightened].
Television content:	The goblin king gives Sarah a gift and it turns into a snake.
Brenda:	(puts both legs up on couch, hugs them close to her body with her arms wrapped around them. She looks towards the researcher).
Television content:	Sarah enters the labyrinth. Huggle the goblin is shown in full, killing the fairies.
Brenda:	(rubs eyes with two hands, legs still in up position close to body. Shields her face (from researcher) with her hands making a shield around her eyes. Still watching the television. Covers eyes completely with her hands when she sees the talking hands.)

Television content:	Sarah falls when the talking hands drop her.
Brenda:	(covers face with two hands, elbows on knees, crying. She is hiding her face from the researcher, but when asked if she is frightened and would like it off, she looks up with tears running down her face and says that she is frightened and would like the television off. At this point the legs were still tucked up near her body.)

Brenda attempted to hide her fear (by shielding her face from the researcher, and by indicating that she was not frightened when earlier asked). In the interview that followed, however, she revealed that she had been frightened of the entire contents of the video. As in some of the earlier child observations, Brenda sat in the huddled position with her knees tucked up close to her body with her arms wrapped around them, which seems to be an indication of fear.

When asked about the video, Brenda indicated that she did not enjoy the video and indicated that all of the contents made her frightened, in particular the people (goblins), the moving eyes on stems, and the talking hands. She said that it was normal behaviour for her to cover her face with her hands when she was frightened of something on television, and indicated that at times she *made a cubby* and hid so that she could not see television, and as well she often left the room if she was frightened. She said that she liked Sarah and the baby - but no-one else - and said that she would not like to be any of the characters at all. In her concluding comments she said *It's the most scary program I've seen.*

Brenda's mother, who had been in the kitchen the entire time and was unaware of the video contents, was astonished that her daughter had been frightened by the contents of the video.

7. Child Observation: Marion (3 and 6 November, 1989)

FORMAT: Marion was seven years of age and was the elder of two children. She attended a suburban state school and was in grade 2. Marion's mother indicated that Marion had been afraid of darkness, strangers, loud noises, dogs or other animals (as a baby), frightening faces on television (in particular on Dr. Who), death of self or family member (because a friend at school had died), being abandoned, snakes, and robbers. On a scale of 0-5 Marion's mother indicated that Marion would probably rate at 2 in terms of fear arousal. Marion had experienced bad dreams about Dr. Who and robbers,

according to her mother.

Marion watched television for approximately one hour in the morning and one and a half hours in the afternoon/evening, indicating that the total daily viewing was two and one half hours.

(i) General comments

During the observations, Marion sat on the couch approximately two metres away from the television screen. On the first day, Marion watched **Play School, Blinky Bill** and **The Return of the Antelope.** Her younger brother played nearby, although at times he watched television with Marion. Marion chose **The Labyrinth** for the video observation.

(ii) Para-social and social interaction

On the first afternoon of the television observations, Marion and her younger brother were watching **Play School** on ABC television. During this period, Marion did not make comments regarding the program contents, but instead asked her brother to be quiet on one occasion and on another occasion, asked her brother to get her a biscuit. During **The Return of the Antelope** Marion informed the researcher that she was going to swimming and MacDonalds on the following day. A little later during the program she asked her brother for more biscuits, and asked her mother to bring her a drink. No other comments were made during television viewing.

During the video observation, in which Marion viewed **The Labyrinth,** each of the comments made was related to the nature of the video, unlike the comments made during television program viewing, as the following examples indicate:

Television content: Goblins appear on the television screen for the first time.
Marion: *They're the Chipmunks* (response made to her brother, who had earlier said *Uh Oh!* on seeing the goblins).

A little later Marion's mother brought the children their dinner, at which time Marion told her mother about the events in the story:

Television content: As Sarah marks the paving with arrows so that she can remember where she has been, the goblins lift the paving and turn the arrows around in the other direction.

Marion: *The Chipmunks are changing it* (to her mother as her mother gives the children dinner).

Television content: The pink talking worm shows Sarah which way to go in the labyrinth, but it is not the correct way to the castle.

Marion: *He's not showing the girl the right way* (directed to the researcher).

Television content: Talking door knockers conversing with Sarah.

Marion: *Is this a true story?* (directed to the researcher).

(iii) Imitation of television models' language and behaviour

During both the television observation and the video observation, Marion did not participate in imitation of television behaviour of any kind.

(iv) Intensity of viewing

During the television viewing, Marion participated in other activities, and was more physically active than some of the other children (with the exception of Greg). During **Play School**, for example, Marion looked at a storybook, plaited her hair, ate biscuits, climbed in the chair, turned a somersault over the chair, left the room to get food, ate her dinner whilst viewing, and played with a hand held water quoits game. The intense viewing periods usually coincided with loud noises on television, as the following examples indicate:

Television content: In **The Return of the Antelope**, there is a loud crash, followed by a scene in which a miniature person is lifted on to a dustpan and is about to be swept in the fire.

Marion: looked at scene (Marion was playing with water game and immediately the television when she hears the crash. She views the intensely (her brother also reacts in the same manner), after the scene, she returned to the game and walked over to get another biscuit from her brothers pile of biscuits).

Television content: There is a scream on **The Return of the Antelope**.

Marion: until she (Marion was plaiting her hair, not looking at television heard a character scream, at which she looked up and

continued	watching for a moment, then called to her mother in the
kitchen	that she wanted a drink).

Marion's viewing was more intense during the video viewing observation, even though she ate her dinner while viewing, had a fight with her brother, and made more comments during the video than the television programs. Her eyes drifted from the screen less often, and she sat perfectly still far more often, than when viewing television programs.

(v) Other activities

As mentioned earlier, Marion participated more than any of the other children observed, in a range of other activities whilst viewing television and video. For example, she looked at a storybook, played with a game, ate snacks, drank cordial, ate her dinner, turned somersaults on the furniture, and fought with her brother whilst viewing television and video. Palmer (1986, p. 139) refers to this behaviour as *lively,* and similarly noted that older children (eight-to-twelve years) participate in much the same behaviour.

(vi) Media-induced fear:

Marion did not appear to be frightened of any of the television programs viewed on the first night of observation. Similarly, from the video observational report and the self-reports following the video, Marion did not appear to be frightened by the contents of the video. It is interesting to note, however, that during the scene in which the 'cleaners' (large rolling spiked monsters) chased Sarah and Huggle, Marion (like many of the other children observed) put her knees up to her chest, in a position that may indicate fear or wishing to distance herself from the offending object. Apart from this example, Marion did not appear to be frightened by the video contents and this was confirmed in her responses to the questionnaire following the video observation. Marion said that she enjoyed the video and was *not really frightened* because she knew it was a 'pretend program'. But if we analyse these comments, we may interpret Marion's behaviour differently. For example, Mehrabian (1972, pp. 35-37) indicates that 'denotative specificity' (the ambiguous use of symbols to denote a specific communicated object - e.g. *It wasn't bad* instead of *It was good*) may negate what is actually said. In other words, when Marion said that she was *not really frightened*, the inclusion of the word *really*, may in fact imply that she was frightened. Furthermore, Marion indicated that she liked Sarah, Huggle, Ludo and the baby, although she

indicated that she would only like to be Sarah or the baby *so that she could get dressed up*.

8. Child Observation: Yolanda (7 and 15 November, 1989)

PROFILE: Yolanda was the only child in her family and was five years of age. She attended a non-Catholic independent school nearby and was in prep. Yolanda was not particularly frightened of any of the listed items, according to her mother. As a baby, Yolanda had turned the radio up very loud and that had frightened her, and thereafter did not want the radio too loud. She was moderately frightened of spiders according to her mother, and in recent weeks had indicated a fear of 'Indians' (which appeared to have resulted from games at school, in which the Indians (some of the boys) would attack other children). On a scale of 0-5, Yolanda's mother rated her as 1-2 in terms of fear arousal.

Yolanda was permitted to watch one hour of television daily (she selects from the children's television range) and was permitted to watch one video on Saturday and one on Sunday (if time permits). The videos are selected from her own videos, which are children's stories (e.g. Pete's Dragon, Mary Poppins, ET, Bedknobs and Broomsticks, Sooty, etc.).

Together with the above television viewing conditions, Yolanda was not permitted to watch any morning television, was not permitted to eat meals whilst viewing television and was not permitted to watch television in the presence of visitors. According to her mother these rules have been operational since babyhood and therefore were not difficult to enforce.

(i) General comments

During the first observation, Yolanda watched **Play School** and **Blinky Bill** on the ABC. She sat on the floor approximately 2-3 metres from the television screen. Unlike the other parents in the study, Yolanda's mother was in the same room throughout the television viewing (preparing dinner in the kitchen area). For the video observation, Yolanda chose to watch **The Labyrinth.**

(ii) Para-social and social interaction

During the television observation, Yolanda often made comments to her mother, most of which were linked to the television content, as the following examples indicate:

Television content:	A pizza is tipped over a man's face
Yolanda:	*I've never seen that on Blinky Bill. Did they really do that?*
Yolanda's mother:	Yes, I guess so.
Yolanda:	*But he doesn't mind does he?*
Yolanda's mother:	No. It's just part of the story.

A little later in the program Yolanda expressed disapproval of the character's behaviour on television:

Television content:	The koala was unwinding all of the film and tangling it up.
Yolanda:	*Naughty!* (undirected comment in a disapproving tone)
Television content:	Blinky Bill went to his house and found someone in there (the snake puppet and is cross).
Yolanda:	*Who do you think is the mean one?* (to her mother). *I think Blinky Bill. I'd be kind.*

During the video (**The Labyrinth**) Yolanda similarly linked her discussions to video content, but to a lesser extent. Sometimes these comments were reactionary statements, such as *Oh no*, or *Don't*, but at other times she made longer comments about the program contents, which are indicated in the following examples:

Television content:	Sarah hallucinates after eating the fruit. Bubbles float around and in one of the bubbles Sarah and the goblin king dance together with other people dressed up in masks, as for a masked ball.
Yolanda:	*They're not bubbles. They're his crystals* (then as she sees the king through the crowd, she says) *I can see the goblin king.*
Television content:	Sarah walks into her bedroom from the tip where she finds the old Gypsy woman (while still hallucinating).
Yolanda:	*It's her bedroom and it's in the tip.*

Yolanda's longest discussion with her mother however was near the end of the video when Sarah found her baby brother in the goblin king's castle. On seeing this, Yolanda said: *They've nearly found him. I don't think she likes him and I don't think he likes her. He tried to kill her.*

(iii) Imitation of television models' language and behaviour

During **Blinky Bill** Yolanda imitated the words of the snake:

Television content:	The snake is in Blinky Bill's house and asks Mrs. Magpie to 'help herself to a cup of tea'.
Yolanda:	*Help yourself to a cup of tea. Help yourself to a cup of tea* (laughing to her mother, then laughed out loud again.)

It was also observed that when the snake was talking and its puppet face was moving around, Yolanda appeared to be imitating the facial expressions of the snake, pulling faces in the direction of the screen while watching the scene.

No other observations of imitative behaviour either during the television program or the video were recorded.

(iv) Intensity of viewing

Yolanda's viewing was intense, in that she concentrated on the television contents almost all of the time. Although she talked to her mother, ate and occasionally fiddled during television viewing, she was rarely distracted from the television or video stories.

(v) Other activities

During the television program Yolanda ate an ice-cream and participated in discussions with her mother, fiddled with her sock, and re-positioned herself on the floor, but did not participate in game or drawing activities while viewing television, although her mother indicated that she frequently draws while viewing television.

(vi) Media-induced fear

Yolanda exhibited behaviour that could be interpreted as fearful, such as hugging her knees tightly to her chest while she was lying on the floor watching the video scene where the goblin king arrived after the baby was taken from his cot. At another point in

the video (when Sarah entered the Labyrinth in the fog and the eyes on stems watched her as she walked past) Yolanda huddled in a tighter ball, and held herself tightly. Her feet and toes were similarly rigid and tense. According to Mehrabian (1972, pp. 28-30) a tense posture conveys a negative emotion, such as fear. He says:

> *Extreme tension occurs when a person feels threatened or when he is threatening ... In sum, there is a special combination of nonverbal cues, tension, and high immediacy, which conveys a threatening attitude. Such an attitude elicits vigilance (tension and increased immediacy) or a flight reaction (tension and nonimmediacy). The choice of one of the latter two reactions is determined by the severity of the threat - a flight being sought when the level of threat is extreme.*

Yolanda's level of fear was not sufficient to cause a 'flight' reaction, unlike Norman and Brenda who experienced tension which was followed by a flight reaction. At the conclusion of the video, when asked whether she had been frightened by the contents of the video, she indicated that she was frightened. She said that the eyes (moving around in a group, on stems) frightened her - thus supporting the observational analysis - as did the goblin king - especially *the part when the girl took some bites of a mandarin* (it was a peach) *and there was a snake in the middle.* During the latter scene, Yolanda shook her head when Sarah went to take a bite of the peach, and as Sarah ate the fruit, Yolanda screwed up her nose, and frowned, as if she too experienced the feelings of Sarah. Lewis and Michalson (1983, p. 234) contend that *True empathic ability enables one to experience the feelings of another person through thinking how one would feel oneself under similar circumstances.*

A further indication of fear, according to Bull (1983, pp. 50-51) is the interpersonal distance between the individual and the fear condition. Yolanda exhibited such behaviour during the video observation. For example, when Ludo growled out loud (out of camera view) Yolanda moved back from the television screen (from approximately 3 metres to four metres), which indicated that she felt the need to distance herself from the frightening content about to appear on the screen.

At the end of the observational study Yolanda indicated that she kept watching the video, even though she was frightened, *because she wanted to see all of it.* Unlike the other children in the study, Yolanda indicated that she would like to be the the big monster with teeth (Ludo) *because then I could fight people a lot and throw them in the sea.* She had earlier reported that she liked that character.

Yolanda's response to the video was somewhat different from what her mother expected, since on earlier occasions Yolanda had cried during similar videos in which children attempted to find their parents, and during which they encountered all kinds of

frightening creatures and were hampered by spiders and trap-doors etc. In the case of **The Labyrinth,** however, Yolanda did not appear frightened at all, and when the video concluded she said: *That was great. That was the bestest video I've ever seen.*

9. Child Observation: Adam (9 and 10 November, 1989)

PROFILE: Adam was six years old and had an older sister and a younger brother. He attended a suburban state school and was in Prep. His mother indicated that Adam was afraid of darkness, dogs and other people when he was younger, but more recently he had been afraid of death of himself or family member (his father had died recently). His mother also indicated that he was afraid of injury, and she said that he was not adventurous at all (she thinks because of fear of injury), and in her words he was 'a sook' if he hurt himself. According to his mother, he had shown concern for children in war stories on television, but was not frightened by such events. In addition Adam was frightened of being abandoned (possibly because of the death of his father) and his mother also indicated that he got upset if there was no-one there to pick him up after school.

Adam generally watched television for approximately ten minutes in the morning and for half an hour to two and a half hours in the evening.

(i) General comments

Adam's television programs were pre-recorded from the morning television programs as cricket was being shown at regular program times in the afternoon. His mother recorded the morning programs, as she sometimes did, for Adam to watch in the afternoon. These programs consisted of cartoons and included several **Abbott and Costello** cartoons and **The Wizard of Oz.** For the video observation, Adam chose to watch **The Labyrinth.**

Adam was seated in a bean bag approximately two metres from the television screen and was in a lying back position with his legs outstretched and his head tipped slightly back and watching intently. He did not look very relaxed.

(ii) Para-social and social interaction

Adam's social interactions almost always related to the television content, and generally consisted of short comments (sometimes unfinished statements) which were expressed concurrently with television programs. His comments were often in response to writing on the screen, such as street signs, signs on buildings and titles of programs. For example:

Television content:	During an Abbott and Costello cartoon, a bank is shown with the sign saying 'city bank'.
Adam:	(reading the sign) *City Bank.*

Television content:	Reading titles for cartoons
Adam:	(reading titles) *Henry's Cat. The Hot Day.*

Such reading continued throughout the cartoons, with Adam reading whichever titles he was able to read, and reading parts of the titles when time did not permit him to read the full title. According to Palmer (1986, p. 72) this type of behaviour occurs as a ritualised performance for some children.

In addition to reading titles, Adam made comments about the programs and the characters in the programs, as in the following example:

Television content:	Denis the Menace's parents are looking for him. A little green creature comes on to the screen.
Adam:	*Oh, that's off Ghostbusters that little person. That's Slima - that's Slima. He's just like that so it must be Slima.* (undirected comment).

Television content:	The little green characters appears again.
Adam:	*That's him again* (laughing).

Similarly, **The Labyrinth** video brought comments, but this time the comments were expressed as questions, rather than statements about program contents. For example,

Television content:	The 'cleaners' are chasing Sarah and Huggle.
Adam:	*What does that do?* (undirected comment)

Television content:	Girl talking to Ludo about getting to the castle.
Adam:	*Does she get the baby?* (undirected, but probably meant for the researcher)

Television content:	Girl searching through her 'bedroom' with the old Gypsy woman.
Adam:	*She said it was just a dream. Is it a dream?* (frowning, directed at researcher).

The nature of the questions implied that Adam was seeking reassurance about the outcome of the story.

On some occasions, Adam began to say things, but got distracted by the television and then forgot to complete the sentences. For example,

Television content:	A monster worm is tunnelling to Emerald City.
Adam:	*He's going to get the* .... (incomplete sentence, undirected).

(iii) Imitation of television model's language and behaviour

During the television observation, Adam imitated the sounds of characters on television as can be seen by the below mentioned example:

Television content:	(Abbott and Costello) voice at the end says 'Ah Yabba' (quietly)
Adam:	*Ah yabba.*

Television content:	Cat spills food over itself and says 'Meow'
Adam:	*Meow.*

During the video observation, Adam's behaviour changed from imitative to empathic. That is, he frequently seemed to take on the emotions, sensations, and feelings of the characters - not just one character - but quite a few of the more significant characters. In doing this, Adam held his head like the character, shook his head to indicate 'no' when the characters responded similarly, jumped when they jumped (in fear) and, as Sarah told Huggle that she forgave him, Adam's face took the same sympathetic emotion as Huggle. Some examples are listed below :

Television content:	The goblin king offers a crystal ball to Sarah and asks her to take it. Sarah shakes her head indicating a no response.
Adam:	Adam shakes his head indicating a no response simultaneously with Sarah.
Television content:	Sarah jumps when she is startled by Huggle who comes up behind her.

Adam:	Adam jumps when Sarah jumps. (It should be noted also that Adam's mother, who was watching the video with her children, similarly jumped).
Television content:	Sarah encounters a talking worm, who stretches his neck up to talk to Sarah.
Adam:	Adam stretches his neck up imitating the head position of the talking worm.

There were numerous other examples of the way in which Adam empathically reacted to the video in this way.

Lewis and Michalson (1983, p. 234) indicate that *children as young as 2 years can imagine themselves in the place of another and act in an empathic fashion.* But a study by Wilson and Cantor (1985) found that although American children responded empathically to the emotions of characters on television, younger children (three-to-five years) were less likely than older children (nine-to-eleven years) to share the emotions of a television character. Wilson and Cantor said that though the younger children perceived the character's negative emotions, only two children (out of 29) empathically responded to the characters emotions.

(iv) Intensity of viewing

Adam was an intense viewer, rarely taking his eyes from the television screen. During the television and video observation he did not participate in any other activities. Although he moved his legs slightly while viewing and moved his hands or arms from time to time, he rarely fiddled or participated in any other distracting behaviour.

(v) Other activities

Adam did not participate in any other activities such as eating, drinking or playing during television or video viewing.

(vi) Media-induced fear

Adam said he was not frightened by the contents of the video, although at one stage in the video it was evident that he was. When Huggle frightened Sarah and she jumped, Adam and his mother reacted similarly. However, there was another event that may

have frightened Adam, according to the literature on interpersonal communication. When the goblin king talked to Sarah and told her what she must do to get the baby back, Adam had his legs outstretched stiffly, squeezing his hands together; which according to Mehrabian (1972), implies fear. After the video, Adam indicated that he enjoyed the program and was not frightened.

10. Child Observation: Elle (13 and 14 November, 1989)

PROFILE: *Elle was seven years of age and was the elder of two girls in her family. She attended an independent non-Catholic school and was in year 1. Elle had been frightened of darkness (to the extent that she had to sleep with a night-light in her room), spiders, injury to self or family members, and had been frightened to a lesser extent by characters on television (particularly Dr. Who characters), according to her mother. She had experienced bad dreams, but her mother was unsure of what they were about as Elle rarely remembered them.*

According to her mother, Elle watched television for approximately 2 hours each day.

(i) General comments

Elle watched television with her younger sister over the two day observation period. She sat on the floor approximately 1 to 1 1/2 metres from the television screen. The television was located at floor level - on the lowest level of shelving - and from a floor-seated position the screen was directly in front of the viewer's face. During the first night of observation Elle watched **Play School, Blinky Bill** and the **Return of the Antelope** on the ABC. Elle chose to watch **The Labyrinth** for the video observation.

(ii) Para-social and social interaction

Elle interacted para-socially with the television characters, responding to statements made by the television hosts on **Play School**, as well as interacting with her younger sister who viewed television with her. For example, when John and Benita said 'bye',

Elle said *bye* too. Similarly, when Benita said 'goodbye' again, Elle (and her sister) said: *Bye bye, goodbye teddy, goodbye house.*

(iii) Imitation of television models' language or behaviour

During the television program **Play School**, Elle often 'sang along' with John and Benita. For example, while John sang: *I'm walking in the city,* Elle sang with them. Elle also whistled the **Blinky Bill** theme tune as it came on, indicating that she was familiar with the tune. Elle did not imitate any other parts of the television programs or the video.

(iv) Intensity of viewing

Elle viewed intently for a considerable period of time. On the first day of observation, during **Play School, Blinky Bill** and **The Return of the Antelope,** Elle sat in a relaxed position, making only slight movements and with her eyes fixed on the screen almost all the time. Her viewing was interrupted on two occasions only - once, when her younger sister distracted her with a cake she was eating and later, when her father returned from work (she turned to say hello to him). However, Elle's mother indicated that this intense viewing behaviour was not necessarily typical of Elle's usual television viewing behaviour, as she was generally more talkative while she viewed television.

(v) Other activities

Elle did not participate in any other activities, except for playing with a fan, given to her by her sister. She did not eat or drink while watching television.

(vi) Media-induced fear

During the first day of observation, Elle did not indicate (verbally or behaviourally) that she was frightened of the television programs that she viewed. On the second day of observation, she indicated that she was not frightened by the video **The Labyrinth,** although the behavioural observations suggest that she may have been a little frightened. For example, like many of the other children observed in this study, she hugged her knees to her chest - although not to the degree of the other children. At the beginning of the video, when Sarah was wishing the baby would be taken by goblins,

Elle moved her legs from the folded position on the floor, to the embryonic position up near her chest. Her arms rested on the top of her knees, supporting her head with her hands, in a relaxed position.

Subsequently, Elle indicated that she enjoyed the video and was not frightened by its contents. In comparison to other children reported in this study, Elle's viewing was relaxed and indicated she had little or no fear of video or television programs.

6. Synthesis of findings:

The children under observation differed considerably in the amount of interaction with television characters and family members while viewing. Few children interacted para-socially, even though programs such as **Play School** provided them with the opportunity to interact with the characters. Similarly, few children imitated television characters' language, and none of the children imitated television characters' behaviour. According to Millar (1968, p. 169) children lacking in self-esteem are more likely to imitate a model's behaviour, which may be one explanation of why few children in this study did so.

All the children viewed the video more intensely than the normal television programs, which may have been related to the nature of the video contents. That is, the video contents remained 'exciting' from beginning to end, with adventure, danger, and terror in almost every scene - unlike the television programs, which were relatively bland in comparison. In terms of fear reactions, some children (in particular Norman and Brenda) exhibited extreme fear reactions, both manifesting 'flight reactions' as a result of fear of video contents. In the earlier (school) interview with Norman, he reported that he did not enjoy frightening television content at all and said that although he had not been frightened of television contents, he had been frightened of video contents: in particular, he said, scenes such as cruelty to animals, the after-effects of crashes, and physical violence in which a person is smashing household items, were likely to frighten him. He said also that the appearance of a character would not frighten him at all, but this was not the case in the home observation situation.

Brenda's responses in the (school) interview - in which she indicated that she did not like frightening television programs and would be quite frightened of the scary faces of characters such as witches, ghosts, goblins or other non human type characters - were confirmed during the observations. She indicated at the time of interview that she had a lot of bad dreams about occult programs. For example, she reported that scenes like someone's head spinning around on **Beans Baxter** made her very frightened. She

said, *just talking about it makes me feel frightened.* She reported that other forms of media did not frighten her or give her bad dreams.

Some of the other children (Yolanda and Jillian) also responded emotionally to the video contents, although they did not feel the need to withdraw from the viewing situation. For example, although indicating that she was frightened during the video observations, Yolanda did not want to miss the story and therefore watched it even though she was frightened. She had indicated at the time of interview that she had been frightened of videos such as **Sleeping Beauty** - in particular the *mean witch.* Yolanda reported that she did imitate television and this was confirmed in the television observation when she repeated the words of a character and appeared to copy the expressions of a character. Yolanda also reported at the time of interview that she asked questions about television content while she was viewing a television program and this was confirmed at the time of observation as Yolanda made comments and asked questions about program contents to her mother during the program. According to the interview responses, Yolanda had a good understanding of the fantasy nature of television content, which may be one reason why she was not frightened by the contents of the video. But the two children who were frightened by the video contents also had a good understanding of the fantasy nature of television and video content, which would suggest that children's understanding of the media may have little to do with decreasing their emotional responses to the media. It should be remembered that all ten children had participated in media education activities that were designed to help them understand how frightening characters were created for television in the hope that they would not be frightened by such characters in the future. Therefore it might be argued that media education designed to reduce children's fear reactions to the media may not be a satisfactory way of helping children cope with frightening mass media contents.

The observations also revealed that some children may try to hide their fear of media contents, perhaps because of embarrassment or sex-role conditioning. For example, Jillian did not self-report fear of video contents during observation, although - judging by non-verbal signs - she did experience fear. Her interview responses indicated that she had not been frightened of any form of media except the cinema. She indicated that physical violence and accidents were the most frightening events on television, and that to a lesser extent the appearance of a character was frightening.

Adam did not self-report he was frightened of the video contents, although there were some minor indications that he may have been frightened; but he empathised with the characters, and responded behaviourally as if he was in the same situation. During the school interview Adam indicated that he had not been frightened by television contents,

but he had been frightened by a video called **Starfighter**, although he could not recall the actual incident that had frightened him. At interview he said that none of the listed fear-evoking scenes frightened him and that he did not imitate the media. It would appear that Adam's behavioural responses to the media may have been subconscious and therefore could not be classified as imitative in the sense that others imitate the media. Adam became a part of the story, responding immediately to the situations as they occurred on the screen and as such did not wait for the actor's response.

The observational component of this research has helped to establish the reliability and validity of the children's interviews through cross-referencing of verbal reports with behavioural responses of children.

Chapter 8

Synthesis of Trends and Discussion of Results

We vivisect the nightingale to probe the secret of his note.
T. B. Aldrich (1836-1907)

Introduction:

Chapter 8 draws together the questionnaire and interview results reported in Chapter 6 with the analyses of child observational reports presented in Chapter 7. Discussion of the results is in relation to the propositions outlined in Chapter 4 and the earlier reported review of literature (Chapter 2).

The chapter is divided into 8 sections. These are:

1. Television and video access
2. Children's television and video viewing habits
3. Children's media-induced fears
4. Children's imitative use of the media
5. Children's ability to interpret, judge and make decisions about media processes and/or content
6. Media's effects on children and other members of the community
7. The perceived need for media education for infant children
8. Conclusion

1. Television and video access:

The results show that the penetration of the television set into the modern family home is virtually complete. Only a few families have resisted purchasing a television, generally because they do not like what television has to offer, although even in homes where television did not exist children reported that they watched television at the home of grandparents and friends. The success of television is probably due its ability to provide families with economical entertainment, the immediacy of information dispersion, and its ability to present visual information about world events; its price makes it affordable to everyone, and there is social pressure to know what others know, have what others have, and so on.

In terms of video recorders, well over half the homes have one. The advantage of the video recorder is that the user can record television programs and watch them at a more convenient time. In addition to this benefit the user can hire pre-recorded video-tapes and watch these when the regular television transmissions do not appeal to his tastes. The pre-recorded video industry has probably been successful in Tasmania because of the limited number of television stations operating in the state and the types of programs that these stations have to offer.

2. Children's television and video viewing habits

Proposition 1.1: Ref. p 132

The results of the surveys produced a discrepancy between parental and children's reports of television viewing habits. Parental results indicated that four-to-eight year old children watch television for an average of 13.5 hours per week, compared with children's self-reports indicating that four-to-eight year old children watch television for an average of 21.5 hours per week. The discrepancy between parental reports of children's time spent viewing television and children's self-reports of television usage may be as a result of children's unsupervised viewing (which was indicated by Cupit, 1986, and others), which results in uninformed parental perceptions of what children actually view, or of the amount of time they spend with television.

The discrepancy may also be the result of parents deliberately or subconsciously manipulating the facts so that they are not seen to be uncaring or bad parents; parents are

constantly told by the print media - in which television is generally perceived to be a negative influence - about the negative effects of television. Parents read and hear that 'children watch too much television' and perhaps parents themselves feel that their children watch too much television. Such beliefs may have led parents to feel guilty about their children's television viewing habits and to have under-reported their children's television viewing.

According to Edgar (1983) and Hodge and Tripp (1986) the 'average' Australian child watches television for 23 hours per week. The evidence in this study indicates that Tasmanian infant children view less television than Australian children in general. This finding may be related to the low number of television stations in Tasmania in comparison to other states, and thus the reduced availability of children's television programs.

The amount of television viewing is of importance to this study in that infant children are believed to be particularly vulnerable to any form of influence at this age. When children spend time with the media they are largely prevented from participating in other important activities - such as communicating with parents, peers and others, physical activities, outings, etc. The amount of viewing hours is not the only concern and is perhaps not the most critical issue to be considered. The viewing *content* and *context* is of particular concern as well. It may well be argued that a child exposed to two hours of violence and terror and/or pornography might well be more 'at risk' than a child exposed to 30 hours of innocuous television programs. Of concern too is the fact that there is a growing number of children who are exposed to television programs and videos alone in their bedroom - or at the homes of other children - without adequate supervision. Although this research does not examine the viewing context in great detail, it does provide valuable information regarding children's exposure to media content.

While finding that the overall average viewing hours of infant children in Tasmania is less than the Australian average, this study found that some groups of children watch television far in excess of the Australian average. In support of proposition 1.1, this study found that children's viewing habits (hours) correlated to school type (reflecting different socio-economic backgrounds). This fits with evidence which suggests that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are heavier television viewers than other children (Tindall et. al. 1977).

Children's self-reports of television use indicated that children attending suburban and outer suburban state schools (which were attended by lower socio-economic groups) spent

significantly more time viewing television than children attending independent schools (Catholic and non-Catholic). Children at the two suburban state schools viewed television for an average of 29-30 hours per week (well above the Australian average) compared with independent Catholic school children, who viewed television for an average of 19.5 hours per week, and rural school children attending a state school who viewed television for an average of 16.1 hours per week. As expected, children attending a non-Catholic independent school (located in a middle/upper socio-economic area) viewed television for an average of 14.2 hours per week.

A possible explanation as to why independent school children spend less time watching television might be their academic and extra-curricula commitments. For example, year 1 and year 2 infants at the independent school had home-work to complete after school, consisting of reading and written work. In addition to this, many of the children had music practice or other commitments such as swimming lessons or ballet, which limited their amount of free time for entertainment. In contrast, children attending urban state schools did not usually have homework on a regular basis and, perhaps because of financial constraints, had less opportunities to learn about the arts. It was interesting to note, however, that rural state school children watched significantly less television than urban state school children. This may be related to geographical factors, as many of the rural school children have to travel by car or bus to and from school, leaving them less time for leisure activities before or after school. Urban school children on the other hand generally live within walking distance of the school and are home shortly after school ends. Rural children may also have other commitments, such as helping parents with work around the home or farm, like feeding and caring for animals, etc.

There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the above findings, as precautionary measures were taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. For example, children were not only asked which programs they had viewed on television the evening prior to the interview, but were also asked about the program content. In relation to methodology used in previous studies, Williams (1986) highlighted problems with reliability and validity of the methods used for obtaining information for the measurement of children's media use. She criticised parental log books, and children's reports of the number of programs they saw or estimations of the times they viewed television, on the basis that people forget to fill in log books and that children have a poor comprehension of time. However, this study surmounted such problems by simply asking children to recall the television programs viewed by them on the day prior to the interview. This was not a difficult task for children, when they were reminded of what programs were on television the day before. Cross-

checking could also be carried out by asking children to tell the researcher about the program contents.

This study also found that the heavy television viewers were most likely to be the older boys in the sample, i.e. eight year old boys attending suburban and outer suburban state schools. The hours per day spent viewing ranged from zero to eleven-and-a-half hours in the outer suburban school and zero to nine-and-a-half hours in the suburban state school, thereby supporting proposition 1.1 and the findings of Holman (1980) and the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (1978), who reported that television viewing increases with age during early childhood until adolescence. In her study of Junior High School children, Edgar (1973) also found that children who have low self-esteem are likely to be the highest users of the mass media; but no self-esteem measures were taken in this study. It is nonetheless interesting that over a quarter of the children believed that characters on television (such as the Cosby children in **The Cosby Show**, or children in **A Country Practice**) were happier than themselves.

The implications of these findings relate to the possible need for state school teachers to consider action - perhaps in the form of media education - for their students. This study has found that children in suburban state schools are particularly heavy users of television and may therefore be in greater need of media education than other groups of children.

According to parental responses, almost all infant children watch either the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) or a combination of ABC and Tas-TV (commercial channel). Few parents indicated that their children watched Tas-TV only, and no parents indicated that their children watched programs on SBS television. It is perhaps unlikely that any infant children would watch programs on SBS, as most have limited reading skills and find it difficult to read subtitles and thus understand program content.

An analysis (from children's interviews) of children's television programs viewed on the evening prior to the interview, similarly indicated that over half the children watched a combination of ABC and Tas-TV programs, although almost one-quarter of children indicated that they watched Tas-TV only (compared with 5% of parents who indicated that their children watched Tas-TV only). The variation in these results may have occurred because of the sampling technique. For example, the sample of parents was statewide, whereas the sample of children came from five southern schools and a close examination of the data indicated that children in the suburban state schools (the heavy television viewers) also tended to be the Tas-TV viewers.

As might be expected, different age groups had different favourite television characters. For example, four, five and six year old children in the study, and parents of younger children, rated characters such Zia in **Cities of Gold**, Inspector Gadget or Penny from **Inspector Gadget** or **Play School** hosts as their (or their children's) favourite television characters. On the other hand seven and eight year old children, and parents of older children, rated characters such as Kylie Mole from the **Comedy Company** or Kylie Minogue from **Neighbours** as their (or their children's) favourite television character, indicating that there are age differences in children's liking for television characters. Girls were more likely to rate a female character as their favourite television character and boys were more likely to rate a male character as their favourite television character. For example, girls rated Zia as their favourite television character and boys rated Estaban - a male character in **Cities of Gold** - as their favourite character.

According to children's self-reports and teacher's reports, many infant children have access to 'adult' videos, as discussed in chapter 6, section 3.4. Both Cupit (1986) and Lelong (1989) reported that primary and secondary children were exposed to adult rated videos in Australian homes. It is of interest to note that one of the videos (**Texas Chainsaw Massacre**) was recently banned in Tasmania by the Commonwealth Censor.

It is suggested by Cupit (1986), Garner (1986) and others, that such viewing is psychologically harmful to young children. Cupit (1986) found that parents of older (9-12 year old) children reported that after seeing frightening video contents, some children suffered from persistent fears of night-time, of having a shower alone with the screen door closed and had experienced bad dreams or nightmares as a result. Garner (1986), a clinical psychologist working with children, expressed concern over the emotional short and long term reactions of children to television contents, suggesting that behavioural manifestations may not be immediately apparent, but may erupt later during times of stress.

Parents have a moral obligation to ensure that their children are not exposed to events that could be physically or psychologically harmful to them. It is the researcher's belief that violent and pornographic video content could not contribute to children's healthy development. Therefore it is suggested that media education might tackle this problem - perhaps through parent/teacher workshops, regular newsletters to parents regarding the harm of exposing children to such material, pressure on government officials to carefully monitor the use of video material, etc.

3. Children's media-induced fears: (propositions 2.1 to 2.5)

Proposition 2.1 and 2.2 Ref. p. 138

Proposition 2.1 and 2.2 were supported. This research has confirmed the view that all forms of entertainment media have the ability to frighten infant children, although it was clear that some forms of media were more likely to elicit fear reactions in children than others. Thus, there were more reports (from parents and children) of fear induced by the electronic audio-visual media (television, video, and cinema) than reports of fear induced by other forms of entertainment media (e.g. print, live drama). Well over half (67%) of the parents indicated that their four-to-eight year old children had been frightened by the contents of a television program. This result was confirmed by 56% of children self-reporting fear of television program contents, all of which supports earlier findings of Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin (1978), and Cantor and Sparks (1984), that many children are frightened by television contents.

However, the observational assessment of children's television viewing behaviour indicated that none of the ten children experienced fear of **television** contents, either by self-report or analysis of behaviour, during the period in which they were observed. A probable explanation of why these children were not frightened stems from the nature of the programs. This research did not investigate children's fear responses to 'adult-rated' television programs as all ten observational cases watched television only in the early hours of the evening. All the television programs were *children's programs*; they were programs such as **Play School, Blinky Bill, Sesame Street,** etc. which were not considered to be frightening or threatening to children. In fact, several of the children indicated in their interview and at the time of observation that **Dr. Who** frightened them. For this reason they did not watch **Dr. Who.** This is a pleasing point because it would appear that some infant children 'self-regulate' their television viewing by avoiding programs that frighten them. We might therefore assume that infant children are *selective* television viewers, watching what appeals to them and rejecting programs that are unpleasant or frightening to them. Of course, some children enjoy being frightened a little, in which case they choose to view programs such as **Dr. Who.** The fact that these children enjoy being frightened indicates that the fear is not likely to be harmful. It also may suggest that children who enjoy being frightened by television also perceive television content to be fictional. But some children - according to their self-reports - do not enjoy being frightened by television content.

Many children had been frightened by video contents, according to parental and self reports, a finding also reflected in the child observations: 36% of parents reported that their children had been frightened by video contents, and 47% of children reported that they had been frightened by video contents. The child observations focussed on children's behaviour whilst viewing a potentially frightening *'children's'* video in their own home and the evidence drawn from this included the fact that some children were so disturbed by the video contents that the video had to be turned off. Two of the ten children cried as a result of fear induced by the video contents, whilst almost all other children displayed defensive efforts to protect themselves from the fear stimuli. As mentioned earlier, children either enjoy being frightened, tolerate being frightened, or dislike being frightened by the media. Well-adjusted children who enjoy being frightened a little are unlikely to be harmed by the experience because they perceive the experience to be pleasurable. Children who dislike being frightened seem to 'censor' their experiences and avoid contact with potentially frightening programs, thus minimising the opportunity to be harmed by such experiences. The other group of children tolerate frightening experiences either because this is the lesser of two evils (as compared to, e.g., going to bed, being apart from parents) or simply because it is the normal behaviour of the rest of the family. These children are most likely to be harmed by the media's frightening contents because they do not enjoy the fear experience and continue to be exposed to it. An additional group of children watch frightening programs and are not frightened by them because they are desensitized to that type of content; they have experienced frightening programs so much that they are no longer frightened by them. This does not necessarily imply that children have a 'fixed character type'; it is more likely that at different ages or stages of development, children prefer - or are comfortable with - certain types of program content.

In addition to confirming and analysing children's fear reactions to video contents, this study also provided considerable support for *in vivo* observational recording (pen and paper, and video monitoring) as an appropriate method of obtaining children's fear responses to the media. Although it was evident that some children's behaviour was slightly influenced by the presence of an observer, most children's behaviour was typical of regular television viewing, according to their parents.

The results of this study found that there was a 'core' of frightened children. That is, children who reported that they were frightened of television contents, were almost always the ones who reported that they were frightened of video contents, storybook contents,

cinema contents, etc. This finding did not differ according to age, gender or school differences.

In comparison with children's fear of television and video, fewer children were frightened by storybook contents: only 19% of parents indicated that their children had been frightened by the contents of a storybook, and 23% of children indicated that they had been frightened by storybook contents. There are several possible explanations for this. To begin with, according to Greenfield (1984, p. 49) children come to understand whether storybooks are fiction or fact before they understand what is fiction or fact on television. She says that *television, with its presentation of live action, is a more seductive medium in transforming fantasy into reality* and is thus more likely to depict frightening events as reality and so frighten children. In addition to the nature of the media presentation, books for infant children - in contrast to a great deal of children's television viewing - require a high degree of parental involvement because of young children's limited reading skills. This means that parents have the opportunity to intervene or censor the printed word and answer children's questions about printed material. On the other hand the television viewing situation is often an unsupervised activity without the benefit of adult intervention and explanation. Further, infant children 'read' their books in close proximity to adults which, according to Cantor and Wilson (1988), is a non-cognitive strategy used by children to reduce fear, and to provide them with an emotionally safe reading environment.

While it was true that all age groups had been frightened by all the media forms, it was interesting to note that four year old children (according to their self-reports) are significantly more likely to be frightened by storybook contents than any other age group, thus supporting proposition 2.2. A possible explanation for this finding may relate to younger children's immature cognitive understanding of reality combined with their limited real-life experiences. For example, younger children (three and four year olds) have difficulty differentiating between reality and fantasy on television, and it is not until they get older they develop new perceptions about television reality, as Greenfield (1984) illustrated. It it therefore probable that younger children are less likely to understand the fantasy nature of storybooks than older children, and thus would be more easily frightened by their contents than older children who are able to differentiate fictional from factual books.

This study found that only a few infant children had been frightened by a cassette story. Only 9% of parents indicated that their children had experienced fear when exposed to cassette stories; children's self-reports indicated that 15% of children had been frightened

by the contents of a cassette. It appears that cassette stories, like books, may be perceived to be less real than television or video and thus have a lessening impact on their ability to frighten.

The cinema, however, was a source of fear for approximately 30% of children, according to parental and children's self-reports. This result is not surprising, given that the nature of the cinema medium closely resembles that of television and video. The result indeed compares with that on videocassette fear.

In contrast, both parents and children indicated that live drama productions were not fearful for children. Only 15% of parents indicated that live drama had frightened their children, compared with 7% of children who reported fear from live dramatic productions. It would appear that children may be able to associate the dramatic representations of live drama into their own make-believe play, as Singer (1973) suggests. In other words, four-to-eight year old children may perceive live drama to be a form of make-believe play, similar to the make-believe play common in children between two and eight years.

Based on the above discussion, education for infant children regarding the media's ability to frighten should probably centre around the audio visual media. This research has found that it is these media that are likely to cause the most fears.

According to children's self-reports and parental reports, girls were significantly more likely to be frightened by all types of entertainment media than boys, thus supporting proposition 2.2. This also supports the earlier findings of Thomson for the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (1972) with older students, and of Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin (1978) with a small group of five and six year old Finnish children. However, there was considerable disagreement about fear of television content between parental reports and boys' self-reports. So, 64.8% of parents indicated that their boys had been frightened by television contents, compared with 45.8% of boys who reported they had been frightened by television contents. The discrepancy between parental reports and children's reports is somewhat puzzling. There is considerable agreement between parental and children's reports of fear for other media areas, which suggests that the differences are not due to parents' lack of ability to empathise with sons and also that the difference between parental reports of boys' fear responses and boys' self-reports does not appear to be a result of 'male-conditioning' (i.e. boys are generally encouraged to inhibit their emotions).

In support of the proposition (2.2) that children from different schools (and thus different social backgrounds) would differ in their reports of fear arousal, this research found that children attending non-Catholic independent schools were more likely to be frightened by the contents of a television program than children enrolled in state or Catholic schools. Over three-quarters of independent (non-Catholic) school children indicated that they had been frightened by contents of a television program, compared with 62% of Catholic school children and less than half (46.5%) of state school children. These significant results are similar to those of Lagerspetz, Wahlroos and Wendelin (1978), and also suggest that children's fear responses are related to social background. One possible explanation could be that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds might not openly express fear to another person because it is perceived to be a weakness in their character.

The implication of these findings suggest that media education may need to take into account these differences. Their differing reaction does not mean that they understand what is happening - it possibly might mean that they are more likely to accept the image or behaviour as part of their life.

In addition, it would also appear that television diet, that is the amount and nature of television viewing, is also linked to social background: as already noted, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds were the heavier viewers and also more often the viewers of 'adult' programs. That they were also the group less likely to report fear of television contents, suggests that the amount and type of television content may have 'desensitized' or dulled their emotional responses to fear stimuli. Earlier studies have shown that prolonged exposure to violence on television has a desensitizing or numbing effect on its audience (Drabman and Thomas, 1975; and Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, 1978). According to this theory, the viewer develops a toleration of the noxious stimuli on television (e.g. violence) as a result of continued exposure and becomes emotionally desensitized to it. The implications of such desensitization or numbing of the emotional senses is that viewers may become insensitive to cruelty and violence in the real world, and may be led to believe that such behaviour is acceptable, appropriate or justifiable. It could be argued therefore, that this particular group of children (heavy television viewers/ viewers of 'adult' programs - generally from lower socio-economic backgrounds) need media education.

In terms of video-induced fear, there were no significant area differences. But for storybook and cassette stories there were significant relationships between children's self-reported fear and their school background. For example, independent non-Catholic and

Catholic school children were more likely to be frightened of storybook contents and cassette stories than any other group of children. This finding may be related to the wider range of stories offered to children by parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

Catholic school children and independent non-Catholic school children were more likely to be frightened of cinema contents than state school children. Half the Catholic school children and almost half the independent non-Catholic school children reported fear of movie contents. In comparison, only 14.1% of state school children reported fear of movie contents. It would seem likely that state school children, by virtue of their repeated exposure to fear-evoking stimuli, are significantly more desensitized to such contents than other children in this study.

Proposition 2.3: Ref. p. 141.

Proposition 2.3 was supported. This research supports the findings of Cantor and Sparks (1984) and Sparks (1986) in which they found that infant children were more likely to be frightened by a television character's physical appearance (e.g. witches, ghosts, goblins etc.) than by television representations of real life events. Well over half of the parents reported that their children were frightened of non-violent images (i.e. the appearance of a character), and a similar proportion of the children indicated that they were frightened of such images on television. This somewhat contradicts the view presented by Feshbach, and reported by Singer (1973), that television programs which were clearly identifiable as make believe would be less frightening for children. Even though children were aware that such characters did not exist in the real world, and could not exist, they remained a source of fear for many children. The child observational studies conducted as part of this research clearly indicated children's fear of fantasy characters (two children, one male and one female experienced moderate to intense fear reactions to the images) even though such characters were clearly identifiable as make-believe. It could be that infant children who are scared by frightening faces and frightening content of any kind, link that information or image to previous 'similar' real-life and other media fear experiences, thus building up fears of particular events until they are able to comprehend the situation. For example, children who have experienced fear of a person in real life, may similarly fear unusual or frightening faces in the media (or vice versa). They would continue to fear such images until they learned that such images were not real or harmful at which time such fears would be extinguished. This view is consistent with the model of fear which was presented in Chapter 4.

Also supporting the work of Cantor and Sparks (1984), this research found that infant children were frightened by creatures that were able to transform from one state to another (for example, a man into a wolf). Almost half of the children indicated that they would be mildly frightened or moderately frightened of transformational characters on television and a quarter of the parents indicated that in their opinion such images would frighten their children. In Cantor and Sparks' study they found that 24% of six to seven year old children were frightened of transformations, according to parental reports. The interesting finding in these results is not the fact that infant children are frightened by such events, but the significant difference between children's self-reports of fear and reports given by parents. As the following discussion shows, parents often had little idea of what was likely to frighten infant children.

According to parents, the most frightening image on television for their infant children, was that of physical aggression or violence involving the visible injury or death of an animal. Half the parents indicated that their children would be either moderately or intensely frightened of such events. Children's self-reports contradicted this perception, with over 90% of children indicating that such events would not frighten them at all. The disparity between parental and children's responses may be related to the methodological differences used in the study; adults were provided with a written description of potentially fear-evoking stimuli and children were given a verbal description together with a photographic example of each fear-evoking stimuli. Adults may have imagined the 'worst possible' scenes in their minds and thus responded accordingly. Alternatively, parents may have falsely assumed that their children share the same emotions as themselves, as Knowles and Nixon (1989) have suggested. Parents who might themselves be frightened, shocked or upset by acts of physical aggression or violence involving the injury or death of an animal may believe that their children would react in the same manner. It seems likely, however, that most infant children do not find such scenes upsetting. It is interesting to note that Edgar's (1973) study found that Junior High School students reported that seeing 'animals hurt' was the most disliked or upsetting event on television. The results of this study suggest, however, that infant children do not respond similarly and that there are developmental differences in children's media-induced fears, thus supporting the work of Sparks (1986) and Cantor and Sparks (1984).

Parents also believed that their children would be frightened of viewing a suicide or attempted suicide on television, whereas most children indicated that they would not be frightened of such events. Again it would seem likely that parents reported their own fears and were unable to predict their children's fears accurately. A possible explanation is that

children have little understanding of injury or death. From the child observations it was obvious that children who had experienced a death in the family had a fear of death or injury, but children who had not had these experiences were not so frightened by such thoughts.

An earlier pilot study indicated that infant children were frightened by fighting on television and this was confirmed in the present study. Well over half the parents indicated that their children would be frightened by physical violence involving the murder of a person, and indeed just over half of the children agreed. These findings were in contrast to Cantor and Sparks' (1984, p. 96) study in which they reported that few three and four year old children and seven and eight year old children were frightened by 'realistic' events on television. They argued that *young children may be less frightened by these television programs and films because they fail to appreciate dangers that are not graphically portrayed.* It would seem from the present study that even when the events are shown in still photographic form, infant children report that such events would frighten them. It might be that American children are more desensitized than Australian children to real life dangers as depicted on television. It is extremely likely that television programs shown in Tasmania are not as violent as those shown on American television, though it is also true that American 'real life' is, for many children, significantly more violent too.

Over three quarters of the parents also indicated that their children would be frightened of an impending accident or aftermath of an accident on television, although less than half of the children indicated that they would be frightened of such events. It was interesting to note that in the discussions with children at the time of interview several children indicated, when they looked at the photograph of the car crash, that a member of their family had been injured in a car accident. These children responded that such incidents made them frightened, further suggesting that knowledge or previous experience of an event was an important factor influencing children's media fear reactions.

Over half the parents indicated that their children would be frightened of a natural disaster on television (fire, flood, earthquake, cyclone), although over three quarters of the children indicated that they were not frightened of such events. In fact many of the children recognized the photographs taken from news reports of the Queensland floods/cyclone and indicated that they had seen them on television but had not been frightened.

Verbal violence on television did not seem to cause many children to be frightened, although parents believed that such events on television would frighten their children.

Again it appears that parents have responded according to how they might feel or react, rather than how infant children might react to such situations.

Non-human characters (for example, 'Rock-biter', or Daleks on **Dr. Who**) did not frighten many children (a little over 25%), according to children's self-reports, although over half the parents believed that such images would frighten their children. It should be pointed out, however, that quite a few children indicated that they did not watch **Dr. Who** because it frightened them. Many of the children gave examples of characters and events that frightened them, suggesting that non-human characters such as robots, a detached hand in a box moving around, green hands, man-eating weeds on **Dr. Who**, heads turning around and so on, frightened them. From the children's responses it would appear that occult-type programs would be extremely disturbing to many infant children, although many children mentioned fires, injury and accidents as frightening as well.

It would appear from the above discussion that parental perceptions of four-to-eight year old children's intensity of fear do not correspond to the children's self-reports about the intensity of fear experienced as a result of exposure to television content. In almost every instance, parents perceived children to be more frightened of the examples than the self-reports of children showed them to be. As already noted, this may be because parents tend to project their own responses onto their children. It is possible that this could have occurred in this instance. But it must be remembered that parents' perceptions were no doubt based on their children's previous behaviour with similar examples of television content, as well as other factors such as the emotionality of the child, etc. Thus it might be argued that parents responded accurately to the question and that children may have underestimated their fear reactions to such stimuli. For example, children may quickly recover from television's frightening experiences and fail to recall or report how they really reacted at the time of being exposed to a frightening scene. Another explanation of the discrepancy between parental and children's self-reports might be that many of the children have not actually been exposed to such scenes (as some parents reported), implying that both parents and children had to 'guess' how the children might react to such media experiences. It is likely therefore that although there is in some cases vast differences between parental and children's reports, neither can be considered inaccurate. The findings do suggest, however, that it is important for researchers to take the time to question children and their parents when they are endeavouring to ascertain how children might feel about particular events. In particular, it may be useful to interview parents and children individually and then conduct a joint interview so that parent and child could discuss and debate conflicting results.

In terms of the intensity of fear experienced by children and gender differences, the proposition was supported. Girls from an independent non-Catholic school background were more likely to experience greater fear intensity than boys to all forms of television and video content.

The implications of these findings suggest that infant children might benefit from specific education about how characters and events are created for the media. Such education might decrease children's fears. The findings of this study suggest that (from what the children are saying) education about scenes such as frightening characters' faces and explicit violence between two people (including transformational characters) might be an important area to begin educating children, and hopefully decreasing their fears. Independent non-Catholic schoolgirls in particular might benefit from education of this nature.

Just over one-third of parents indicated that their children were more frightened of news programs than of dramatic episodes of a television series, although only half that proportion of children (15.8%) agreed. This is an interesting finding in the light of the current government inquiry into violence on television. Much of the debate about violence in the media has revolved around the level of violence in television news broadcasts, and suggestions that children are watching the news and are being disturbed by such scenes. The present research suggests that infant children, by their own admission, do not like the news; most do not watch the news and a relatively small proportion indicated that the news was more frightening than other programs on television. They are not frightened by the news because they do not watch it. In terms of this study media education about the news contents and their potential to elicit fear reactions in young children, would not be a high priority. It is probable, however, that older children are more frightened by news content - according to the research of Cantor and Sparks (1984) - and therefore there is reason for concern.

Proposition 2.4 Ref. p. 145.

In terms of children's responses this proposition is supported; but in terms of parental responses, the proposition is not supported. For example, it is somewhat disturbing to find that over half the children indicated that they had experienced bad dreams or nightmares about television program contents. But parents present a very different picture in that less than a quarter of them said that their children had bad dreams about television contents. Presumably some children do not report bad dreams to their parents - perhaps

because they feel that their parents will prevent them from watching future programs of that nature. Bad dreams and nightmares are distressing to young children and a source of concern for parents. When infants awake with bad dreams they are disturbed by images that appear real to them. The frightening experience may make it difficult for children to relax and return to sleep, and recurring dreams may in fact bring further disruption to sleep. Concern about children's bad dreams relates to potential long-term psychological effects as suggested by Singer (1975) and others. Children may become anxious about having bad dreams and thus may increase their bad dreams because of restlessness. The increased bad dreams could lead to anxiety states (ie. anxiety attacks or phobias) in later years.

Even so, the incidence of bad dreams suggests a need for media education in an attempt to reduce children's fears and thus bad dreams. It is expected that such education should be based on the audio-visual media for reasons that will become clear in a moment.

There were fewer reports of bad dreams from videos, according to children's self-reports and parents' reports. This may be the result of parents and children having more control over the video content chosen. In other words, parents and children may select videos that are more suited to their own interests and viewing preferences than what is offered to them on television and this may result in fewer fears of video and fewer bad dreams as a result of viewing video contents. This research also found that children viewed few videos per week in comparison to television programs. Given that children are less frightened by video content and less likely to have bad dreams as a result, perhaps parents should replace television viewing with suitably chosen videos for their children.

All other forms of media had little impact on children's bad dreams and, interestingly, even children's reports of bad dreams as a result of viewing movies at the cinema were few. This was expected to be higher, considering that children tended to be frightened of movie content during the movies. A possible explanation may be that parents generally accompany children to the cinema whereas - as has been indicated earlier - many children watch television and videos unsupervised. At the cinema parents provide children with emotional support and other fear reduction tactics (albeit unconsciously) such as providing them with pleasurable activities - eating sweets and so on. Therefore the security of the viewing environment (parents sitting close to children) may be a significant factor in reducing latent fear reactions to media contents. It might thus be inferred that if parents sat with infant children at home while they watched television and video, providing them with emotional support and answering their questions, children's fears might be reduced as well as their bad dreams about media contents.

According to self-reports, girls were more likely to experience bad dreams as a result of watching television content than boys. However, Edgar (1973) found in a study of older children that boys were more likely to experience bad dreams from television content than girls. It is likely that these gender differences are related to age or developmental differences in children's selection of television programs - that is, their television diet. There were no differences in children's reports of bad dreams when cross-tabulated with children's school type.

In terms of children's media induced bad dreams and age, no relationship existed, and therefore the proposition was not supported.

As a result of the findings, it is suggested that parents in particular might receive information about the effects of the media on children together with advice about selecting suitable media products for infant children.

As expected, boys were more likely than girls to enjoy or like watching frightening television program contents, and state school children were much more likely to want to watch very frightening television contents, compared with Catholic and non-Catholic independent school children. Indeed very few independent school children appear to enjoy watching frightening television programs. These findings are probably related to children's previous media experiences. As already noted, state school children like to watch frightening television content because they are familiar with such film genre and are not frightened by it.

4. Children's imitative use of the media: (propositions 3.1- 3.2)

Proposition 3.1 Ref. p. 151.

An interesting finding of this study was that four-to-eight year old children were far more likely to imitate television and video contents than any other form of media thus partly supporting proposition 3.1. This may well be related to the amount of time children spend with television products, although more research is needed to explain this relationship fully.

This study found that four-to-eight year old children do not use movies as a source of imitation in their play or activities. However, there is evidence that children talk to parents or others about movie content (over half the children said they talk to someone about movie contents, and almost half the parents indicated that their four year old children talk to them about movie contents). It is likely that children discuss the contents of movies at the cinema with other people because going to the movies is generally a special event for children. For most infant children it is an infrequent, pleasurable activity and is generally carried out during holiday periods, unlike other media use which is generally taken for granted and not considered special. The fact that children do not imitate movies, but do imitate television and video suggests that the nature of the medium is unlikely to be the cause of the imitative behaviour. Frequency of use, the imitative nature of the home viewing environment, or perhaps the social utility of television might be factors that make this medium more popular for imitation. More research would be required to make any further comments about this.

Of particular concern to this study is the suggestion that television provides children with unsuitable imitative role models, particularly when children are exposed to fantasy content that is perceived by them to be 'real' and possible in real life. For example, if children perceive that a television character can fly using superhuman powers they may believe that they can similarly fly if they say the magic words or wear the right clothes. Such imitation of popular fantasy characters can as we have seen in the past, lead to injury and death of children. It was interesting and pleasing to note however that children in this study did not imitate the anti-social or potentially dangerous behaviour of role models - with the exception of four children.

According to parental, teacher and children's reports, television and video are an important imitative model for approximately half the children reported about in this study. Girls were more likely to imitate songs from television and video than boys, but no other significant gender difference was found on this issue. Children from non-Catholic independent schools were far more likely to sing songs from television than other school groups, possibly because of the higher percentage of girls attending the independent non-Catholic school. Also, the independent non-Catholic school may devote more time to music than the other schools, which may make children more aware of music in the environment. Many of the children from the non-Catholic independent school had private music tutors in addition to their regular music at school, so it may be that student interest and awareness of music influenced children's imitative behaviour. Although many teachers and parents did not give examples of children's imitative behaviour, some reported that children sang along

(e.g. **Play School**); but few parents and teachers indicated that four-to-eight year old children imitated the more aggressive actions of television, e.g. *Kung Fu wrestling, space war fighting games, Monkey Magic fighting, smashing cars up*, etc.

Observation of children's television viewing behaviour in their own home, indicated that not many of the children imitated television contents *as it happened on the screen*, perhaps indicating that children are too busy watching and processing the information of the program at the time. This suggests that children store the information and use it at a later time in their play.

According to both parents and children, there were fewer reports of children imitating storybook contents. A much higher proportion of infant teachers indicated that children imitated storybook contents. This finding is not surprising; partly because teachers were reporting on their whole class, but also because school life and school learning is primarily focussed on books, and as such encourages children to use the information gained from books. Television on the other hand is generally perceived negatively by teachers, and thus might not be so much discussed or imitated in the classroom.

It was noted earlier that parental and children's perceptions often differed. The same applied to teacher perceptions when they were compared with children's and parents' perceptions, although the differences did not mean the results were inaccurate. Teachers observe many children - at a different time and place - and therefore their accounts reflect the degree to which children imitate the media in the playground and in the classroom. On the other hand, parents' accounts of children's imitative use of the media is related to children's imitative behaviour at home, before and after school. By gathering information in this triangular fashion, we can gain a total perception of how children imitate the media, and where they tend to imitate various forms of media. However, in some instances, children reported that they hardly ever imitated a form of medium(e.g. books), although others (teachers in particular) reported that children often interacted at school using books as a basis for behaviour and language. An important point to remember is that we often do things unconsciously, without thinking or knowing that we are doing things. For example, few of us could recall every hit tune that we hummed or sang along with in one day of listening to the radio. Similarly, children are not always aware or conscious of their imitative actions, and thus may not report all forms of imitation. For this reason children may have under-reported examples of imitation.

In terms of the implications of these findings it is apparent that infant children do imitate the media - particularly television and video contents. The potential to imitate negative behaviour is apparent, however, this study found that the majority of imitative behaviour was neither negative or harmful. Therefore in terms of the impact mediation model of media education there does not appear to be a high priority for educating young children about the potential dangers of imitative behaviour.

Proposition 3.2: Ref. p. 151.

Proposition 3.2 was not supported. Although there was evidence to suggest that seven and eight year old children were slightly more likely to imitate media contents than younger four, five and six year old children, the results were not significant and therefore the proposition was not supported. Furthermore, younger children although less likely to understand media contents, did not differ significantly in their imitative behaviour from older children in the sample.

5. Children's ability to interpret, judge and make decisions about media processes and/or content: (propositions 4.1- 4.3)

Proposition 4.1 Ref. p. 157.

Proposition 4.1 was supported in that children do ask questions about the media. And as predicted television and video appear to be a greater source of curiosity than other media. According to parental reports, this study found that infant children were more likely to ask questions about television, books and videos than any other kind of media. For example, parents indicated that their children *often* ask questions about television content and nature. It could be assumed that children ask their parents about television and video because they generally use those media in the home and therefore have access to a parent during or following viewing. However only 6.2 % of children indicated that they *often* ask questions about television content which suggests that they may be unaware of the numbers of questions they ask. Teachers indicated that infant children were more likely to ask them questions about storybooks, and less likely to ask them very often about television, video or other forms of media. This suggests that children may believe that it is appropriate for them to ask teachers about storybooks, but not appropriate for them to ask teachers about other media contents. Television is generally perceived to be a 'play' activity and is not associated with work or academic learning and for this reason schools have not encouraged discussion about entertainment television in the classroom. According to children,

however, less than half ever ask people about television, five-sixths never ask people (parents or teachers) questions about books, and little over one third of the children ever ask about videos (almost all, occasionally). This finding conflicts with teacher responses regarding the amount of children's questions about storybooks. As already discussed, teachers' results are doubtless inflated because they are responding in relation to many children rather than in reference to one child only. On the other hand children are responding in relation to their personal enquiries regarding storybook content.

Few children, parents or teachers indicated that they (or infant children in their care) asked questions about cassette tapes, cinema and drama. This finding is somewhat unusual as it was assumed that children would ask parents questions about cinema or live drama contents, particularly since infant children are generally accompanied by their parents to these outings.

The interesting finding is that children are far more likely to ask parents about television, video, the cinema and drama than their teachers, and the implications of this suggest that perhaps parents should be provided with information to assist them respond to media enquiries at home, or perhaps parent/teacher interaction needs to be greater in this area so that both teachers and parents can work together to assist children in their understanding of the media.

Proposition 4.2 and 4.3: Ref. p. 158, 161.

Proposition 4.2 was not supported in this study. The results indicated that on the whole infant children of all ages had an accurate understanding of what constituted reality and fantasy on television. For example, very few children indicated that cartoon characters such as Penny on **Inspector Gadget** or **Paddington Bear,** were real people or real bears. Parental reports confirmed that children understood that such characters were not real people, although fewer teachers were confident that all their children understood the fantasy nature of such characters.

Their responses also suggested that almost all children understood that magical effects on television (e.g. Superman flying) can not happen in real life, with parents (and teachers to a lesser extent) concurring. There is evidence, however, that some of the younger four, five and six year old children are confused by such fantasy events, such as the six year old girl who jumped off the garage roof with an umbrella, believing that she could fly like Mary Poppins.

Most children also indicated that they understood that stunts in which people crash cars or jump from buildings without being harmed could not be performed in the real world without injury or death. But almost one fifth of the children (the majority being younger boys) thought that such events could be performed by normal human beings without being harmed. The implications of this finding are obvious, since if children perceive such acts to be 'possible', they may imitate them in their play activities without knowing the danger involved. This was clearly illustrated in the literature review of media's effects on young children.

As one might assume, television characters that did not look like people in the real world were less likely to be believed real by children. For example, almost every child interviewed in this study indicated that characters such as Sooty (puppets), Fat Cat (adult performer dressed up as a large cat), talking cartoon animals (e.g. in **Dot and the Koala**), and Gumby (an animated clay character), were not real people or real animals; parents and teachers supported this view. According to Greenfield (1984), when children perceive characters to be like someone they know, they are more likely to perceive the character to be real or like them. The findings of this study are that most infant children do not perceive animated or puppet characters to be like real people and therefore have a good understanding of such fantasy characters.

There were however several types of television content that were especially confusing for four to eight year old children. The results indicated that although 70% of children didn't believe that programs such as **A Country Practice** were true stories, the remaining children believed that such stories were true. This was confirmed by parental reports. Teachers similarly indicated that in their perception, children did not understand that such stories were not true. It was interesting to note that quite a few parents and teachers thought that children believed that actors in stories such as **A Country Practice** and **Neighbours**, continued to be those people in their real life, and children's responses to the question similarly indicated that they believed that television characters assumed the same role in their real life. As expected, younger children were more likely than older children to have such beliefs thus supporting proposition 4.3. An explanation for the uncertainty of some children about whether such stories are true may be found in Toffler's (1971) discussion in which he says that viewers sometimes form vicarious relationships with television characters, and that at times the characters *take on a reality* almost like our real friends. Children may identify with these characters and thus perceive these characters to be like their friends, and thus find it difficult to differentiate between reality and fantasy.

Greenfield (1984) similarly supports the 'identification' theory as a possible explanation for children's inability to distinguish fact from fantasy.

The results indicate that many children are also unsure about the reality of fighting scenes on television, in both news programs and dramatic programs even though most respondents (children, parents and teachers) indicated that children believed that news stories were true. For instance, almost one-third of children interviewed believed that actors fighting in television drama stories were really fighting and that they would require hospital treatment as a result of injuries. Similarly, almost a quarter of the children interviewed believed that people injured on television drama stories were really hurt. This finding substantiates the views of Greenfield (1984), who postulates that realistic styles of program contents tend to leave children believing that the contents are true. In relation to news items depicting people fighting on television, over a quarter of the children indicated that they believed such items to be pretend stories, although less children believed that people injured in the news items were pretending. Parental and teacher responses similarly suggested that children were confused by real and pretend fighting on television and in all examples, the findings were age related. Younger children - in particular four, five and six year old boys - were more likely than other children to be confused about reality and fantasy on television - again supporting proposition 4.3.

An interesting finding was that although almost all children had no idea how 'people got inside the television', almost all children believed that the people (television characters) did not *live* inside their television set. The concept of television transmission is a difficult one even for older children and some adults, so it was not unusual to find that children of this age did not understand how the images got to their television screen. But at least they had a general notion, and realised that action did not actually occur in the set.

In relation to advertising on television, nearly half the children were unaware of its role. Many children (in particular the four-to-five year old group) believed that advertising was to give the people in the story a rest, while others of the same age believed that advertising breaks were to give them (the children) a rest from the story. Only a little over a half of the children understood that television advertising was endeavouring to get viewers to buy goods. In fact the photographic example shown to children - from the *Twisties* commercial, in which an actor walks through the screen to get some Twisties from a teenage girl who is viewing the film - indicated that even of the children who understood that advertisements were to sell products, many of the children said that the advertisement (*Twisties*) was to get people to go to the movies. Many of the children completely missed

the advertised product as a result of concentrating on the 'story' in the advertisement. It may be that the advertisement will set up 'associations' for the children and on their next visit to the cinema, they will want to buy Twisties. On the other hand, 'story' advertisements may distract the young viewer from the advertised product. This has clear implications for advertisers, particularly when they are aiming their advertisements at young children. If the advertised product is abstracted by complex storylines, infant children may not perceive it to be an item for sale.

Therefore, in terms of this study, it could be argued that education to help children discriminate between media fantasy and reality would probably be a waste of time for most children - since the majority of children already have a good understanding of this concept. If such education was to be included, children are more likely to benefit from activities and discussions regarding the reality and fantasy of violence on television and demystification of advertising.

6. Media's effects on children and other members of the community: (propositions 5.1 - 5.3)

Proposition 5.1 and 5.2 Ref. p. 161.

From the inception of television there have been investigations into its effects on its viewing audience. Results from such studies have filtered through to the public, thus colouring their beliefs about how media affects them. This study sought to determine parents', teachers' and children's perceptions of media effects on young children and others in the community by asking for their personal opinions about specific topics. Firstly, parents and teachers were asked whether, in their opinion, violence in television and video programs might have a lasting antisocial effect on the behaviour of children in their care. Parents were somewhat more optimistic than teachers, in that one third indicated that violence on television would negatively affect the behaviour of their children, in comparison to 80% of teachers who indicated that violence on television would have a negative effect on children in their class. But approximately three quarters of both parents and teachers believed that the level of violence on television was related to violence in their community and, as expected, the majority of parents and teachers believed that criminally-minded people might use information from television programs or videos to plan or commit a crime thereby supporting proposition 5.2. It would appear that teachers and parents are concerned about the media's potential effects on members of society, which indicates that

both teachers and parents are likely to be favourable to media education based on the mediation model.

Proposition 5.3 Ref. p. 162.

Infant children were also asked general questions about violence in the media. As expected, girls were not as keen as boys to see fighting on television thus supporting proposition 5.3. Children from the independent non-Catholic school were least likely to want to see fighting on television, followed by Catholic school children, whereas a significant proportion of state school children do like to see fighting on television. Since the independent non-Catholic school had a high proportion of girls, it is likely that these findings have been influenced by this. Even so, independent school children generally indicated that they did not like to see fighting on television, also supporting proposition 5.3. This finding may be related to their social upbringing and to a moral stance about the evils of fighting. Many of the state school children, on the other hand, liked to see fighting on television; this suggests that they were familiar with television violence and they did not find such behaviour distasteful - on television at least.

Most children did not think that people in their community fought a lot, which is an accurate perception of life in Tasmanian communities. According to statistical evidence (Bureau of Census and Statistics, and Yearbooks for each state of Australia), Tasmania is less affected by serious crime than all the mainland states of Australia.

7. The perceived need for media education for infant children: (propositions 6.1 to 6.5)

Proposition 6.1 and 6.3 Ref. p. 164, 165.

The overwhelming majority of parents (90.8%) and teachers (85.7%) indicated that there was a need for media education for infant children, thus supporting proposition 6.1 and the views expressed by the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (1978), Canavan (1975) and others. However, only one third of infant teachers indicated that they had appropriate skills to teach mass media education to infants thus supporting proposition 6.3. There are relatively few publications and training courses available to inform and educate teachers in media education for infant children, and at the time of writing this thesis few states had developed guidelines or curriculum documents in this area. Access to information is one possible factor contributing to teachers' lack of knowledge about media

education. Also linked to knowledge and skill acquisition is the fact that infant teachers in Tasmania are given no undergraduate training in mass media education. Although a course in mass media education exists for teachers at post-graduate level, after several years of operation no infant teachers have embarked on education at this level. The implications of this are serious if media education is to be implemented in this state.

As already noted, almost a quarter of infant teachers indicated that they had taught media education in the last year to their class, although most indicated that they had taught it incidentally and not as part of any planned curriculum. There were, however, two teachers who indicated that they had taught media in more depth as part of a theme concentrating on communication in society.

Proposition 6.2 Ref. p. 165.

Proposition 6.2 was supported. Both teachers and parents perceived media education to be the combined responsibility of schools and parents; thus parents indicated that they would be supportive of a media education curriculum for infant children. Since it is unlikely that most parents have the teaching skills or knowledge of the media to be able to inform and educate children, it would seem appropriate that schools take on the major role of media educator. Integration of courses at the school level ensures that all children receive media education and not just a privileged few. The results of this study indicate that children from state schools (and from lower socio-economic backgrounds) are the heaviest viewers of television and thus are particularly in need of media education compared to their middle-class counterparts. The latter not only watch less television but also have a range of positive forces working in their home environment to counteract any negative influences of the media.

Parents' support for media education activities was given substance by their willingness to become involved in trial media activities with their children. Some parents and teachers acknowledged the need for school-based workshops on media education for parents to assist their children with media education. This would be a positive step as various writers have argued the need to educate parents about the media and its effects on children.

Proposition 6.4 Ref. p. 166.

Proposition 6.4 was supported. There was general agreement between parents and teachers as to the subject areas that should be included in media education curriculum for

infant children. Both parents and teachers perceived *fact and fantasy* in the media to be a priority area for inclusion in media education for infant children, and highlighted the need to help children perceive the difference between fact and fantasy in the media. However, as discussed earlier, most children already have a good understanding of media representations of fact and fantasy. Parents and teachers also both indicated that the *purpose of the media* should be the second most important area for inclusion in media education for infant children because children need to be educated about the multi-purpose nature of television, and thus to learn that the media can serve a functional purpose. Both parents and teachers also felt there was a need to educate children about the *influence of the media*, so that children understand that the media has the ability to distort information. Smaller groups of parents and teachers indicated that children should learn about advertising in the media so that they may grow up to be more aware consumers, and that children should learn how to *evaluate the media,* so that they could assess the suitability and appropriateness of programs for their use and thus selectively choose media contents according to some form of criteria, rather than watch and accept anything that is offered by the media.

The implications of these findings suggest that media education should probably include areas such as fact and fantasy, purpose of the media and influence of the media. However, it was found that most children already have a good understanding of media fact and fantasy in almost every area that was examined. Therefore the decision to include this area in any form of media education needs to be based on only those areas that confused children e.g. realistic events presented in drama and news; advertising, etc.

Proposition 6.5 Ref. p. 169.

In terms of the scope of media education, proposition 6.5 is supported. Just over half of the teacher and parents indicated that mass media for infant children should cover all areas of the mass media with the remaining parents and teachers indicating that mass media in the infant school should cover either television and video only or television only. The evidence in this study suggests that, considering that the electronic media is the most influential in infant children's lives - e.g., they imitate television and video more than any other form of media; they are more frightened by the contents of television and video (and the cinema) than any other form of media; they are more likely to have bad dreams about television and video than any other form of media, and they use television and video more than any other form of media - education about the audio-visual electronic media should be given greater prominence than media education about printed or audio material. But that is not to say that

other areas should be ignored, as this study indicates that all these forms of media influence the children in their daily activities, although not to the extent of television, video and the cinema.

8. Conclusion:

This chapter has sought to draw together the results of the parental and teacher questionnaires, the children's interviews, and the child observational analysis.

Based on the assumption that infant children imitate and are frightened by the mass media, and do not understand media reality and fantasy, this study sought to use a multi-methodological framework from which to gather and analyse data in relation to children's media use in the Tasmanian context. The triangulation method of gathering data proved to be a valid method of examining children's use and understanding of the media, even though at times there was little agreement between parental, teacher and children's views of children's understanding of the media. Perhaps the most significant finding from the methodology used to gather data for this study, was the evidence to suggest that single methods of data collection may not accurately reveal the real situation.

In terms of the need for media education for infant children, this study found that children are influenced by all forms of entertainment media, but perhaps not to the extent that was anticipated. While there was little doubt that the audio visual media had a greater effect on children than the other forms of media, young children were much better equipped to cope with television than expected. Several areas were highlighted as potential media education topics for infant children and both parents and teachers indicated that media education should be the shared responsibility of the school and the parent.

Chapter 9

Media Education Pilot Study: Part B

The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is incomprehensible.
Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

The previous chapters sought to: (a) determine whether there was a need for media activities with infant children; (b) determine what those needs were; and (c) identify priority areas from which media activities could be developed. The aim of this chapter is to present a rationale for choosing each of the activities, followed by an overview and evaluation of each activity that was implemented in two schools during September and October 1989. This part of the research was in no way intended to be an authoritative model for curriculum for media education but instead provided a 'case-study' of media education in two infant schools. A much broader study investigating teaching methods would be required to ascertain appropriate teaching practices.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

1. Media education activities for infants
   - (i) Rationale for teaching infants about fact and fantasy
   - (ii) Rationale for teaching infants about purpose of the media
   - (iii) Rationale for teaching infants about the influence of the media
2. Activities chosen for inclusion in the media education program
3. Development and selection of the teaching materials
4. Selection of schools
5. Administering the mass media activities
6. Record keeping for the media education activities

7. Evaluation of the media education activities
8. Parental and teacher evaluation of the media activities
9. Discussion

1. Media education activities for infants

This research indicates that Tasmanian infant children have a reasonably good understanding of the media, with the exception of several topics that have been discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore the research indicates that Tasmanian infant children are not as adversely affected by media contents as one might expect. As a result of these rather encouraging findings, only a few activities were chosen for inclusion in the media education pilot study. It was envisaged that such activities might be introduced as a social science or language theme in the infant school. At this stage, there appears to be no evidence to suggest that a formal media curriculum for infant students is warranted.

The research findings of this study identified the following three areas as the basis for media education activities for infant children:

(i) *Reality and fantasy in the media* (in particular, fighting/violence; frightening characters; character roles; make-up; etc)
(ii) *Purpose of the media* (in particular, the multi-purpose function of the media and the amount of time children spend with the media)
(iii) *The influence of the media* (in particular, the way in which the media influence the audience - ie. emotional effects, consumerism, imitation of characters)

(i) Rationale for teaching infant children about reality and fantasy in the media:

According to the findings of this research many infant children were confused by fantasy stories involving life-like characters. For example, realistic television drama programs, such as **Neighbours, A Country Practice** and **GP**, were perceived to be true stories by more than a quarter of infant children in the sample. Similarly, well over a quarter of the children did not have an accurate perception of fighting and injuries in drama stories. The content of these and other similar programs is such that it could influence children's emotional behaviour. For example, scenes involving realistic violent content were

perceived to be real by many children and such scenes were the source of fear for many children. The implications of these findings are that infant children may be negatively affected by the media because they fail to appreciate the fantasy nature of the media. Media education was perceived to be a possible means of increasing children's understanding of the nature of the media and thus of reducing negative effects such as fear.

As a result of the findings of this research, several topics were chosen as the basis of fact and fantasy media education activities with infant children. These included: animation (this topic was not chosen because children were unable to differentiate between animation and realistic programs, but simply because a considerable number of children asked the researcher how animated films were made); fighting on television; frightening faces in the media; transformational characaters on television/video/cinema, live drama, the news. Each of these topics will be outlined and discussed in a following section.

(ii) Rationale for teaching infant children about the purpose of the media

This research shows that children - state school children in particular - are heavy users of television. Results of the parental questionnaire indicated that children need to be educated about the various purposes of television in society, such as, to entertain, inform, record, educate, etc. Parents also felt that children need to learn that television is just one form of recreation and that they (children) do not have to spend all their time with it.

In reference to these issues one activity was planned to educate children about the purpose of the media. It also served as an opening topic to introduce children to the area of media education.

(iii) Rationale for teaching infant children about the influence of the media

There was considerable evidence from questionnaires and interviews to suggest that the media do influence children in many ways. Some infant children were frightened by each of the media forms, although they were more likely to be frightened by television, video or cinema contents. Children experienced bad dreams which they perceived to be the result of exposure to the media.

Although infant children imitated the media (in particular television) in their everyday activities, these imitations appeared to be harmless. Therefore, education to reduce imitative behaviour was not considered to be important in this study. The pilot media education program did however include discussions about imitative behaviour, because there was evidence that children role-played television and video characters. The potential to imitate dangerous behaviour was possible, but not evident.

This research also found that infant children's perceptions of reality were affected by the way in which the media presented drama stories. For example, many infant children perceived live drama stories to be true stories and so believed that the violence they viewed on television was real. In addition, infant children were confused by advertising on television and in other media. Many children perceived the advertisements to be rest periods for either the actors or the viewers and other children had little or no idea about what was being promoted in the advertisements.

The activities designed to educate children about the influence of the media included one lesson on advertising in the media. Other areas such as fear of characters and imitation of characters were covered in the activities designed for the fact and fantasy section.

2. Activities chosen for inclusion in the media education program

The following nine activities were chosen as pilot media education activities for use in two infant schools in southern Tasmania. A full outline of the activities, including teaching notes, classroom and homework activities are included in Appendix C.

Activity 1: Purpose of the media: Why we use the media

The objective of the lesson was to introduce the topic of media education to the children. It also aimed to identify the types and uses of media, identify program preferences, why children liked these programs and identify other leisure activities.

As part of this activity children were shown examples of media - television, video, newspaper, magazine and radio and asked to identify them and discuss what types of information they might provide the user with. Children were asked to talk about the programs they watched on television, to choose which program was their favourite and say why they chose that program. Children were shown a popular television program that was pre-recorded (**Fireman Sam**). Following the video children were asked to discuss what

they liked about the program and what they did not like about the program. They were asked if they watched the program at home in their leisure time. Children were also asked about other leisure activities that can be an alternative to watching television. The homework activity included having the children talk to parents about their favourite television programs and do drawings about their favourite television program on the prepared sheet of paper.

Activity 2: Influence of the media: Advertising

The objective of this lesson was to have children identify advertisements and examine their motives. Children were shown newspaper, magazine and television advertisements and introduced to the term 'advertisement'. They were asked to identify what each advertisement was trying to sell and were also asked whether they thought the advertisement was interesting, truthful, etc. Children were asked either to draw an advertisement from the media or to invent their own advertisement for caring for their teeth or safety on a bike. In addition, as part of the homework, children were asked to observe advertisements in the mass media - in the newspaper, magazines, television and in the street - record them on a specially prepared sheet and return them to class.

Activity 3: Fact and fantasy in the media: Cartoons

The objective of this lesson was to demystify cartoon production and as such was not directly related to the findings of the research. Indeed the research indicated that children had a very good understanding of media fantasy and reality - particularly animated programs. The decision to include this topic was based on two factors: (a) to respond to children's questions about how animated films are made; and (b) to help children understand how potentially frightening animated characters are created. It was believed that if children had a clear understanding of the nature of frightening animated characters i.e. witches, ghosts, etc., such characters would not frighten them because it would be clearly obvious that the behaviour and characters were simply illustrations.

The activity began with a discussion about things that were real, for example, themselves and objects in their classroom. This was followed by photographic representations of things that were real (e.g. a photograph of a real person). A discussion about pretend

things followed, with children identifying 'pretend' people from a series of six photographs of real and pretend people, including potentially frightening cartoon characters (Appendix C - Teacher's Notes and Activities - contains the six photographs, marked 1-6). Following the discussion children viewed a Mickey Mouse cartoon and were asked to think about whether the characters were real mice and how the cartoon might have been made. Children were shown parts of a potentially frightening cartoon in slow motion and single-frame so that they could examine the individual illustrations that go to make up a cartoon story.

The in-class activity involved children making a short cartoon from a series of prepared sheets which children had to colour and then film using a video camera, or a gumby cartoon using plasticine figures created by the children, or a legoland animation. For the home activity children were asked to draw pretend cartoon characters and pictures of people who were real people from television.

Activity 4: Fact and fantasy in the media:/Influence of the media: Violence and aggression

The objective of this activity was to give children an awareness of role-playing in relation to violence and aggression on television, cinema, video and live dramatic presentations. It was believed that if children understood that violence on television drama was pretend, then they would not perceive it to be so frightening.

Children were asked at the beginning of the lesson to explain what fighting was and suggest reasons why people fought. Children were asked to identify media characters who did and did not fight and these were listed for the children to see. A discussion about the effects of real violence followed as well as a discussion about pretend violence in the media. Children were then shown a video tape of animated violence and live action violence. Each piece of tape was played first at normal speed then as single frames. The role of stunt people was discussed in relation to live action violence in drama programs.

As part of the activity children were shown how make-up artists apply 'bruises and blood' to television victims of violence. The demonstration was followed by children applying the make-up to each other. Short scenes of children 'fighting' followed by a scene of an 'injured' child were videotaped and shown (at normal and single frame speed) to children

so that they could see how similar scenes are created for television and the movies. A discussion of pretend violence and real violence followed.

Children were asked to discuss the activity with their parents as a homework activity and were asked to look for examples of violence in the media. They were asked to discuss the examples with their parents in terms of whether the violence was real or pretend.

Activity 5: Fact and fantasy in the media:/ Influence of the media : Cartoon violence

The objective of the lesson was to help children differentiate between animated violence and representations of real violence in the media. Activity 5 followed on from the previous activity, giving children an in-depth look at animated violence. Survey results indicated that children imitated any form of media behaviour regardless of whether the character was a real person or a cartoon figure. It was believed that analysis of cartoon violence might help children understand how unlike real violence the actions really are.

Following a brief discussion about violence in the real world, children were asked to identify violent cartoon characters in the media. Children were then shown a video excerpt depicting violent cartoon characters. After the video had been shown on regular speed, it was shown frame by frame so that children could examine the individual illustrations. As a previous cartoon activity had already been carried out, further animated practical work was considered unnecessary. A discussion about the morality of violence and school rules about violence concluded the lesson on violence.

Activity 6: Fact and fantasy in the media/Influence of the media: Frightening characters

The objective of the lesson was to create frightening characters and give children an awareness of how the mass media creates frightening characters and to identify individual fears and strategies for coping with fears. According to the survey information many children experience fears and bad dreams as a result of exposure to the media - in particular, television, video and the cinema. Therefore the aim of the lesson was to provide children with an opportunity to demystify frightening characters in the hope that such activities might help them understand how these characters are created and thus to reduce children's fears.

To introduce the topic children were shown four 20 cm x 30 cm photographs of frightening faces from television and video (see Appendix C - Teacher's Notes and Activities - photographs 6-9 inclusive). These images were chosen from the questionnaire and interview set as being characters which had particularly frightened infant children. Children were asked to indicate which photograph frightened them the most and these were ordered by the teacher according to the degree to which they frightened the children. A discussion about the creation of the characters followed using the photographs as an example. Children were then asked reasons as to why these characters appeared in the media. An activity followed whereby children dressed up in wigs, masks, false fingernails and old clothing to create a frightening character. A short scene was then videotaped in which the frightening character role-played a mean and nasty old woman.

A discussion about ways of coping with fears followed, with children suggesting ways to reduce fears. As a homework activity children were asked to discuss with their parents how frightening characters are created for the media.

Activity 7: Fact and fantasy in the media:/Influence of the media: Transformational characters

The objective of the activity was to get children to understand and experience the creation of television and film special effects, in particular the transformation of characters. According to children's interviews many infant children are frightened by transformational characters and this activity was planned to teach children how such characters are created in the hope that such demystification would decrease future fears of this nature.

The activity began with a discussion about frightening characters, following on from the previous activity. Children were shown photographs of a man turning into a werewolf and asked whether that could really happen to a person such as the teacher, themselves or their parents. Children were then asked how a person on television might be able to turn into a werewolf. Following discussions a child was asked to volunteer to be made into a werewolf. Make-up was applied to the child stage by stage with each application followed by brief videotaping. At the conclusion of the make-up application the child was asked to howl like a wolf and snarl into the lens of the camera. The video tape was shown to the children and was followed by a discussion of what had taken place.

The homework activity involved completing a story-board sequence of a person turning into a werewolf showing the steps that had been undertaken at school. Children were asked to talk to their parents about the activity.

Activity 8: Fantasy and reality in the media: live action drama:

The objective of the lesson was to identify fantasy stories in the mass media and relate them to events that occur in our real lives. The results of the questionnaires and interviews indicated that many children perceived television characters to be the same character in their real life. For example, children believed that Nurse Loveday on **A Country Practice** was a nurse at a 'real' hospital when she was not on television. It was believed that role-playing activities and discussions about character roles might help children understand the way in which the media creates characters for live drama stories.

Children were asked to recall what they had done from the time they woke up until the time they got to school. Following the discussion children were asked to draw pictures about their morning activities on specially prepared story-board sheets. Children were then shown a videotape of a 'television family' in the morning time and asked to identify events that were not shown to the audience, such as getting out of bed, going to the toilet, washing, walking to the breakfast room, cooking breakfast, etc. Following this discussion the teacher asked children why such events had been missed out of the television story and why such events are missed out of storybooks.

A drama activity followed in which the children took turns to role-play 'other' people. A discussion about pretending and role-playing followed in relation to television and pretend stories in the media - with particular emphasis on stories such as **A Country Practice, Neighbours,** etc.

Activity 9: Fact and fantasy in the media: True stories

The objective of the lesson was to identify factual information presented by the mass media. The research had shown that infant children did not always identify the news and sporting programs as true stories (i.e. as something that actually occurred). It was believed

that by getting children to look for signs of facutal information they might determine whether such items were true or pretend stories.

At the beginning of the lesson children were shown storybooks (fact and fiction), newspaper cuttings and magazine stories and asked to guess which were the true stories and which were pretend stories. Then children were read a short storybook about a fire (fiction) and a newspaper story, with photograph, about a local school that was burnt down (factual information). Children were asked to identify the true story and indicate why they thought that story was true. A further examination of the storybook led to discussions about things to look for to find out whether a story is a pretend story.

Children then took on the role of reporters and gathered 'true' information for a television news broadcast in the classroom. The children took turns at presenting the news and reporting the weather. The news was then replayed to children and discussed in terms of the news on television, radio and the newspaper.

3. Development and selection of the teaching materials

Each activity took into account:

(a) *the survey findings* (that some children do not understand some aspects of the media; that children imitate television behaviour (and to a lesser extent all other forms of media), although these imitations are generally positive in nature; that children are frightened by the media - in particular television, video and cinema; and that children are heavy users of the media);
(b) *the age of the children* (the characteristics of four-to-eight year old children - e.g. short attention span, the need for concrete/practical activities);
(c) *children's interests* (current television programs, films and new storybooks); and
(d) *the psychology of learning* (that children are more eager to learn when the environment is exciting, interesting and stimulating. That children need positive reinforcement and encouragement).

Activities were chosen in light of the researcher's previous experience in working with infant children in the area of media education to help children understand the media. For example, in previous years the researcher had found that infant children quickly learnt how

to handle a video camera and other media equipment and so video equipment was chosen for use in many of the activities. Furthermore, earlier work in media education indicated that infant children had no difficulty understanding concepts like transformations, special effects photography, animation and make-up.

Teachers were provided with the following materials:

(a) a teachers handbook - providing a brief introduction to the need for media activities,
(b) lesson plans for the nine activities,
(c) examples of handouts for students and parents,
(d) nine photographic examples to be used as teaching resources, and
(e) a videocassette containing nine excerpts from television or video programs, to be used in conjunction with lesson plans and materials.

Appendix C provides the teacher's handbook - items (a) to (d).

The videocassette containing the nine excerpts from television and video programs were pre-recorded over a period of several months when the media activities were being planned. They were chosen because of their direct relevance to the topic to be covered with children, their interest to infant children and their ability to reflect current media offerings. The excerpts, each lasting between 30 seconds to approximately 3 minutes included the following information and corresponded to the nine lesson plans earlier mentioned:

Excerpt 1: **Fireman Sam** - (unedited) animated cartoon about a fire in a chimney which had been caused by a bird's nest. This excerpt was used in conjunction with activity 1 to stimulate discussion about favourite television programs.

Excerpt 2: Television advertisements: 'Besser bricks', 'Just Jeans' and 'Good Start' breakfast cereal - used in conjunction with activity 2 to identify television advertisements.

Excerpt 3: Mickey Mouse Cartoon: **Mickey's Birthday Party** - used in conjunction with activity 3 to illustrate the concept of drawn animation.

Excerpt 4: Fighting scene on television from a **Big Event** series - used to illustrate how actors pretend to fight and use make-up to make the scene appear real to the viewer.

Excerpt 5: Cartoon violence - from **Sleeping Beauty** - used to illustrate how cartoon characters fight.

Excerpt 6: Frightening characters - cartoon and live characters that have the ability to frighten children by their appearance - used to show children how such characters are created.

Excerpt 7: Frightening characters - transformation of a man into a werewolf - used to illustrate to children how special effects photography can make it look as though a person can actually turn into a werewolf on television.

Excerpt 8: Pretend stories on television - a television family waking up and having breakfast - used to show that television must edit life as it really happens leaving out all the 'boring' bits and only including events that might interest the viewer. In doing this the media distort reality.

Excerpt 9: True stories - the news - to illustrate that the news is a representation of real events that have occurred and that reporters gather this information from all over the world and then the information is selectively chosen for news broadcasts.

Prior to the start of each lesson, the researcher provided the teacher with student worksheets and letters for parents. Other items - such as plasticine, magazines, newspapers, make-up, wigs, masks etc. were provided by the researcher and brought to the classroom as they were required. The researcher provided and set up all equipment (i.e. video camera, recorder, tripod, videotapes) with the exception of the television monitor at each school. Both schools had two televisions available to the infant classes, although one television at the urban state school could not be tuned to the video 8 recorder and it was therefore necessary to depend on the main television. This proved to be difficult on some occasions as it was situated in the library and at times either the television or the library was in use by other classes. Initially one television at the independent non-Catholic school could not be tuned to the video 8 recorder but following repairs, no further problems were encountered. Equipment malfunctioning at these schools highlighted potential problems that could arise in other schools where equipment is old or incompatible with newer video equipment.

4. Selection of the schools:

From the five schools which participated in Part A of the study, two were selected for trialling the media activities. The urban state school and the independent non-Catholic school were chosen primarily because of (a) their accessiblity, (b) their different socio-economic background and (c) their willingness to participate in the media education pilot study.

Accessibility mattered because it was necessary for the researcher to attend every media teaching session. The two chosen schools allowed the researcher adequate time to travel between the schools, set up equipment and have discussions with teachers following the activities during the fourteen media sessions per week. Although the city Catholic school was equally accessible it was eliminated from the timetable because of other reasons which are discussed below. The remaining schools, the outer urban school and the rural school were excluded because of the travelling distance between them and any of the other schools.

Secondly, the urban State school and the independent non-Catholic school were chosen because they were were significantly different from each other and thus provided the researcher with two diverse groups of students with which to implement the media program. The results of the interview schedule indicated that the two schools differed in that children from the urban state school watched far more television than the independent non-Catholic school children, the children came from different socio-economic backgrounds, and the independent non-Catholic school children were significantly more frightened by media contents than their state school counterparts.

Finally, the two schools chosen for this part of the study were eager to participate in the media education program. The researcher developed rapport with the teachers and students and felt comfortable within these two environments. Although friendly, helpful and willing to participate in the pilot study, the teachers at the two other schools (the rural state school and the city Catholic school) were perceived to be less interested in the research than the chosen schools. That is not to suggest that these schools were uninterested, but simply that they appeared less interested than those at the other schools. It was also interesting to note that in the two chosen schools the principals were strongly in favour of the research, had an interest in the area and were concerned about the amount of television use by students.

Perhaps for this reason perhaps teachers were encouraged to develop an interest in the research being conducted in their school. The outer urban State school was both interested in the research and keen to see the pilot study implemented in the school but unfortunately, because of the difficulty in commuting between this and any other school, it had to be eliminated.

A description of the two schools in which the media pilot program was implemented, was provided in Chapter 5 - section 13 (i) urban state school and (iii) independent non-Catholic school.

(a) Urban state school

The school was located in the northern suburbs. Infant classes which took part consist of Prep (n=25); Grade 1/2 (n= 26), Grade 2/3 (n=25). The school was invited to participate in the media pilot study, via the principal, on 24 August 1989, and on 11 September 1989 each teacher received a package of media education activities including photographs, video, etc. and activity sheets for examination and evaluation prior to the trialling. Teachers were also asked at this stage to make comments, suggest alternative activities and so on if they wished, and also to note any areas which they could see might cause problems.

(b) Independent non-Catholic school

The school was located in a middle-class suburb south of Hobart. Infant classes which took part consist of Kindergarten (n=28); prep (n= 19); Grade 1 (n=15) and Grade 2 (n= 22) of whom participated in the the trialling of the media activities. The school was invited, through the principal to participate in the media pilot study, and on the 15th August 1989, the researcher met with infant teachers and the head of the infant school to discuss draft media activities, as well as teacher, parent, and student commitment and involvement. Following this meeting teachers agreed to participate in the pilot media program and tentative timetables were planned. On 11th September 1989 each teacher received a complete package of media education activities including photographs, video excerpts and activity sheets for examination and evaluation prior to the trialling.

5. Administering the mass media activities

The activities were administered to both schools during the second week of Term 3 to the 6th week of Term 3 (18 September to 20 October). This period was chosen as students and teachers would be freshly rested from holidays. The first week of term provided children and teachers with time to settle into class routines and also provided teachers with time to read and explore the mass media activities as set out in the 'Teacher's Notes and Activities'. All teachers were asked to report any perceived difficulties to the researcher prior to the beginning of the program. The major issue raised by teachers stemmed from concern about the technology - particulary by teachers at the urban State school. Further discussions revealed that teachers at the urban State school were anxious about their performance, particularly with the researcher observing and were concerned about their skills with the equipment. Teachers were reassured that their students would be using the equipment and that the researcher would set up all equipment with the children. Furthermore a compromise was reached and the researcher offered to take the first lesson with each class and to assist with any lessons they were particularly anxious about. All teachers (at both schools) were happy with these agreements and the activities proceeded on schedule.

The two participating schools were previously involved in the child interviews and therefore children were familiar with the researcher's presence in the school. Each school received the same curriculum and each class received the same curriculum, although, depending upon the age of the students, questionning strategies were slightly modified to account for age/stage language differences.

The Table below indicates the timetable for activities administered at both schools.

TABLE 9.1: Mass media teaching timetabale at the urban State school and the independent non-Catholic school during September and October 1989.

Day Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.00		Grade 2/3 *			Prep *
9.30		Prep *			
10.00					
10.30					Grade 2/3 *
11.00	Kinder #				
11.30	Prep #	Grade 1/2 *			Grade 1/2 *
12.00					
12.30					
1.00					
1.30	Year 2 #		Year 2 #	Kinder #	
2.00	Year 1 #	Year 1 #	Prep #		

Code: * = urban state school

= independent non-Catholic school

6. Record-keeping of the mass media pilot program

Comprehensive notes were taken of teachers' questions and children's responses, comments and questions from children during each teaching session. These remarks were recorded by the researcher or the classroom teacher. In addition, students were asked to complete worksheets either during class time or at home with parents. The class worksheets were designed to evaluate children's understanding of the concepts discussed or the activities undertaken in class whereas the home activities were designed to involve parental participation and thus elicit discussion regarding the media with parents and peers in the home. Students were asked to return homework sheets so that the researcher could monitor student progress.

7. Evaluation of the pilot mass media program

Evaluation of the pilot study was based upon (a) observation of activities by the researcher and/or teacher; (b) student responses to class worksheets; (c) homework sheets; (d) overall reports from parents; and (e) teacher evaluation of the entire program. This section presents an overview and evaluation of the program. The activities are as outlined in 2 and 3 above.

(i) Evaluation of Activity 1: Why we use the media

Activity 1 was introductory, designed to introduce children to the area of media education. It served the purpose of defining terms like 'media' and evaluating what children already understood about the media as well as children's perceptions of why we use the media.

All children could identify a newspaper and a magazine but although some children were clear about the role of a newspaper, some were confused. While some children identified the newspaper as being a source of news, others said that it contained 'phone numbers' and the people in the photographs were identified as 'reporters'. The four-to-five year old children who made these comments could identify differences between newspapers and magazines. When the prep children at the independent school were asked to listen to some sounds from a radio with their eyes closed and then guess the name of the 'thing' that made the noise, most could identify that the sounds were coming from a radio. However, when they were asked to do the same, one third of the kindergarten children at the same school thought that the radio was a television.

In an attempt to find out about children's perceptions of television programs, they were asked to identify good and bad programs. The aim of this question was to get children to evaluate television programs that they watched so that they thought about positive and negative aspects of the media. When asked to identify programs from television that they considered good or bad, children had no difficulty in naming programs and giving reasons why they considered them to be good or bad. For example, kindergarten children identified **PlaySchool, Cities of Gold** and **Sesame Street** as being good programs and stated such reasons for liking them as: *they make things* and that there were *no baddies*

in it.. The programs that were disliked by children were not identified by name, although when asked what sorts of things make a bad program one four year old girl said: *big rats try to eat people*. When asked similar questions, prep children identified **Gumby, Playschool, Sesame Street, Wizard of Oz** and **Ramona** as good television programs and identified **You can't do that on television, Allo, Allo, Neighbours, Thundercats** as programs that were bad. Many children identified good programs as being *funny* and bad programs as *silly*.

Older (grade 1 and 2) children who responded to the same question, identified good programs as *having a good story, being funny* and *having good acting*. Some said bad stories were those that included *stealing*. Year two children at the independent non-Catholic school identified programs such as **Beauty and the Beast, Dr. Who, Inspector Gadget, news** and **7.30 Report** as *hated* programs because *they were boring, for older people, showed murders, fires, how people die, or were murder mysteries*. Most of the children preferred to see programs such as **Fawlty Towers, Horizons, Scruffy Dog, Degrassi Junior High, Neighbours, Your mother wouldn't like it,** and **21 Jump Street**. They identified these programs as good because they were *interesting, for children, and funny*.

By contrast, Grade 2/3 children at the urban State school identified programs such as **21 Jump Street, Country Practice, Comedy Company, Cartoon Company** and **Neighbours** as good programs because they were *funny, violent, they had action, they were scary, they were sad, they were positive* and they *had wars*. Programs identified as bad, were **Batman, Country Practice, Neighbours, 21 Jump Street, News, Comedy Company** *because they had romance,* or were *boring, because of the characters* and because *they had too much singing*.

Not all children responded to each question, but it was interesting to note that some of the 'bad' elements of a television program that were identified by children in the independent non-Catholic school were perceived to be 'good' elements of a television program for several of the urban state school viewers of the same age.

Children in both schools indicated that they watched television, listened to the radio at times, listened to cassette tapes - usually at school, went to the cinema occasionally with a parent or friend, went to live dramatic productions - usually with the school and hardly ever read the newspaper.

As part of the homework activities children were asked to draw about their favourite television program and, with the help of a parent were asked to give reasons for why the program was their favourite. The aim of this activity was to identify reasons for watching a particular television program and, like all homework activities, it was designed to stimulate discussion between parents and children about television viewing habits. Responses from children indicated that in many cases parents had provided children with support. This was verified by parents' handwriting on the worksheets; and in one or two instances parents had helped children draw the picture. Children had no difficulty completing the activity and clearly understood what was expected of them. For example, children drew pictures about programs such as **Neighbours, Country Practice, Wizard of Oz, Gumby, Punky Brewster, Batman, Playschool,** etc. Responses from the home worksheet closely resembled in-class verbal responses from the children and included statements such as:

> *There's lots of things on it* (**Play School**)
> *I like it because it's got nice colours, it's interesting and because Tin Man, Lion and Scarecrow and Toto are in it. I think Toto is cute. They have exciting adventures together* (**The Wizard of Oz**).
> *It makes me laugh and I think it is funny* (**Gumby**).
> *Because they teach you things and because they read you stories* (**Play School**).
> *I like it because it's not scary* (**Play School**).
> *Glomer is magic and can make things disappear and make them come back* (**Punky Brewster**).
> *Because I like to see Fat Cat dance* (**Fat Cat**).
> *Because it is good and Superted can fly* (**Superted**).

The first media activity met its objectives in that it (a) introduced children to the media terms such as media, radio, television, newspapers, characters, etc.; (b) highlighted the functional uses of the various forms of media by asking children to indicate who used each kind of media at home and why they used the media; and (c) encouraged children to think about their favourite television programs and identify good and bad aspects of programs as a basic form of evaluation of the media.

(ii) Evaluation of Activity 2: Advertising

The aim of activity 2 was to clarify the role and purpose of advertisements, given the findings that some infant children were unable to differentiate advertisements from stories and were confused about the purpose of advertising on television.

When kindergarten children were shown advertisements in the newspaper, magazines and television, almost all children had no idea why these messages were in the media. One four year old said: *shops are trying to get the people to buy their things so they put them in the newspaper,* but most of the children identified the advertisements as *stories*. Other children said advertisements are on television because they gave the people in the stories a rest, *because they gave the people watching television a rest, because they are good for kiddies, because at night time you don't go to the shops so they show you on tv.*

The teacher explained to the children that messages were called 'advertisements' and that they were in the newspaper, magazines, and television to show people what was for sale so that maybe the readers or viewers might buy some of the things in the advertisements. A variety of advertisements was shown to children, together with details about what the advertisements were trying to sell.

When asked whether they had ever wanted something they had seen in an advertisement, many of the children said that they would like to have some of the things, and identified toys as the main item they would like to buy. Even after the preceding discussion and examples, when children were asked to think of their favourite advertisement, many kindergarten children were confused between advertisements and television programs. For example, when asked his favourite advertisement, one five year old boy said **Transformers** and **Play School**, and a girl aged five said *sparkle ponies, care bears* and **Cities of Gold**. Their responses indicated that many children still did not understand the difference between an advertisement and a television program. At first it was thought that children may have been responding correctly by naming an advertisement for a television program, but after questioning it was clear that kindergarten children were confused between programs and advertisements. For example, when these children were asked to tell about what the advertisement said, they recalled information from an actual episode of a series.

Almost all the prep children were able to identify advertisements from television. For example, children said that breakfast cereal and toys were advertisements they had seen on television and in the newspaper. However, a small proportion of prep children confused advertisements with television programs. For instance, a five year old boy identified A **Country Practice** as an advertisement and another five year old identified **Play School** as an advertisement. When asked about the content of the advertisement, the children recalled events that had occurred in a previous episode, just as the kindergarten children had done earlier. Other children immediately responded that such programs were not advertisements and gave examples of television advertisements for coat hangers, clothing, sweets, toys and jewellery.

Children were shown three advertisements from television and asked what the advertisements were selling. All children in prep could respond correctly to this question and, following discussions about advertisements with kindergarten children, they too were able to identify the product that was for sale.

Older children in Grade 1 and Grade 2 could identify advertisements in newspapers, magazines and on television and did not appear to have difficulty differentiating between advertisements and television programs. Older children were more aware of advertisements on television and several children expressed an interest in looking for 'faults' in advertisements.

Following the general discussion and showing of advertisements, children were asked to complete a worksheet in which they identified an advertisement from any media source. Older children had no difficulty in completing this task correctly, but young children (kindergarten) still confused television programs with advertisements. For example, some kindergarten children drew pictures of **Play School, Gumby, Worzel Gummige, Dr. Who, Sesame Street,** and **Cities of Gold** as advertisements. Discussions with kindergarten children revealed that three quarters of the kindergarten children could not distinguish between advertisements and television programs even after the activity and discussion. Further discussion with the class teacher brought out that most of the kindergarten children watched ABC and therefore did not see many advertisements on television, which may provide an explanation for their misunderstanding and inability to distinguish between an advertisement and television program.

The home activity sought to make children aware of advertisements from various media sources. For example, children were asked to find two advertisements from television, two advertisements from the newspaper and two advertisements from the street. In addition they were asked to identify what the advertisements were selling and the advertisement they preferred and why. Once again this activity was designed to stimulate parental involvement. Children who completed this worksheet appeared to have no difficulty in identifying advertisements from the three sources.

The activity, although designed to meet the needs of infant children by developing an awareness of the function of advertising and to help them differentiate between advertisements and programs, failed to help kindergarten children understand these concepts. It would appear that kindergarten children 'read' the advertisements for the 'story' behind the sales message and, in doing so fail to identify the product. As noted, the kindergarten teacher indicated that teaching about the concept of advertising may have failed because the kindergarten children had not previously been exposed to advertising and thus had no idea of what an advertisement was. Older children had no difficulty with the activities or concepts and were able to identify advertisements in each form of media. At the conclusion of the activity they had a good understanding of the function of advertisements.

(iii) Activity 3: Cartoons

Working on the assumption that infant children do not understand how cartoons are created, the activity was designed to help them do so. The underlying assumption was that if children understood how cartoons were created they would not find the characters or actions frightening.

The lesson began with a discussion of terms such as real and pretend. Early questioning revealed that all infant children had a good understanding of the two terms. They could identify the difference between a real person in a photograph and a photograph of a pretend cartoon person from a series of photographs. But there was some confusion with one of the photographs; when shown a photograph of a cartoon drawing of Snow White, some of the kindergarten children said that the picture was of a real person. Further discussion

revealed that some of the children had recently been to see a live dramatic production of Snow White and as a result believed that the cartoon illustration was of a 'real' person. Kindergarten children were not confused by any of the other cartoon illustrations and clearly indicated that they were not photos of real people. But it appears that the live dramatic performance of Snow White had influenced children's perception of what was real or pretend.

Older seven and eight year old children had no difficulty distinguishing between photographs of cartoon characters and photographs of real people.

As part of the activity children participated in making one of three types of cartoon-type films. These consisted of (a) a drawn Mickey Mouse cartoon; (b) a plasticine Gumby cartoon, and (c) object animation (Lego) cartoon. The activities were designed to deconstruct the animation process, thereby enabling children to see how cartoon films are made for television and the cinema. All age groups were able successfully to complete a short animated film, and all children were able to explain the process following the activity, indicating that infant children understood the steps involved in animation.

The homework activity consisted of a follow-up activity in which the children were asked to draw either a cartoon character or a real person from television. Older children had no difficulty distinguishing real characters from cartoon characters although several of the younger children (kindergarten) confused cartoon characters with real people on television. For example, one four year old boy wanted to draw Dr. Who as his cartoon character but was encouraged to draw Superted and Spotty after discussions with his mother. Another five year old drew Kylie Minogue as a television cartoon character. Most children had no difficulty identifying cartoon characters such as Mickey and Minnie mouse, Tweety Bird, Gumby, Gummy Bears, Bugs Bunny. All of the 'real person' responses from children were correctly identified as human characters from television and they included such people as Charlene from **Neighbours**, Nonie from **Play School**, Benita from **Play School**, Tony Barber, Kylie Mole, Tom Payne (TAS-TV newsreader), Maria on **Sesame Street**, Peter Coombe (children's entertainer), Jana Wendt (current affairs reporter) and Alyce Platt (television game show hostess).

As with previous activities, several of the four year old children failed to understand the difference between cartoon characters and live characters in the media following the media activities.

(iv) Activity 4: Violence and aggression

Working from the finding that many children did not understand that violence in live drama programs was pretend, the activity aimed to teach children about how violence is created in the media. The assumption was that if children understand that such violence is not real, they would not be frightened by it.

Children participated in a general discussion about fighting, the need to fight and whether or not they had ever seen anyone fighting in real life, on television, or in the newspapers. Children recalled the following television images: *fighting in China; a patient hit a doctor on GP because his daughter died; cartoons like Gumby have fighting;* and they named also *Degrassi Junior High, 21 Jump Street, Boxing, Inspector Gadget,* and *Snow White.* A couple of four and five year old children were confused about whether the fighting on television programs was real or pretend. For example, when asked whether fighting on television was real, a five year old boy said that it was real in **Superted.** Another five year old pointed out that it was not real fighting in **Superted.** When asked whether fighting on television news was real a five year old girl indicated that *it is real because the news is real.*

Prep children from the urban state school were able to identify real fighting in their own environment. For example, one boy revealed: *when I was at my auntie's place at Gagebrook a man smashed the window and he hit someone and it took his skin off. Another boy said: my dad had a fight with my brother. My dad punched my brother in the mouth.* The discussion also revealed that some children did not see the difference between an accident and intent to harm another person in that children also identified injuries and perhaps to some degree identified those as violence. For example, a five year old girl said: my dad took me to football and someone kicked the ball into someone's mouth and he got hurt. Another girl said: *we went to football and someone hurt his hand and he had to have it fixed.* In relation to television news, children could recall items containing violence. For example, a girl aged six recalled *on the news someone got shot in the face and a bit of her face came off.* That was real. Similarly a girl said: *on tv (news) they told us about the girl who got stabbed at Bridgewater and that was real.*

Some older seven and eight year old children confused fighting in drama programs with real fighting. For example, some children at the urban state school thought that fighting on the news was 'fake'. Similarly, grade 1/2 children at the independent non-Catholic school thought that **Tour of Duty** - *fighting with guns - was real.* **Rock and Wrestling,** on the other hand, was perceived to be 'pretend' rather than real fighting.

The above examples, together with the information gathered in the surveys, highlight infant children's misunderstanding of violence in the media. Based on this information, practical activities were aimed at helping children understand that violence in drama programs is not real. There was also a discussion about violence in news programs.

Following the discussion about the ethics of fighting, children were introduced to make-up techniques used on television and film to simulate injuries. Children administered bruises, cuts and abrasions to each other using make-up and fake blood. No formal homework activity was given, although children were asked to discuss the activity with their parents, and 'let their parents in on some of the secrets of television'. Feedback from parents and children revealed that many children discussed this activity with their parents; furthermore many of the children re-created the activities at home, having made the fake blood using the recipe that the researcher had provided and make-up belonging to their mothers. The Figure below illustrates a simulated injury created by children at the independent non-Catholic school.

FIGURE 9.1: Simulated injury created by infant children at the independent non-Catholic school.

The activity met the objectives of the lesson plan in that it successfully demonstrated to infant children the techniques of creating violence in the media. Following the activity all children had a sound understanding of 'pretend' violence and injuries as depicted on television drama shows.

(v) Activity 5: Cartoon violence

The activity regarding cartoon violence was designed to provide children with examples of the fantasy nature of cartoon violence so that they could understand that cartoon violence - like live drama violence - was pretend.

Following a recapitulation of examples of violence involving real people on television, children were asked to think of cartoon characters who fought on television. All age groups had no difficulty recalling cartoon items that contained violence. For example, a girl aged five said: *the Fox and the Hounds had violence. The farmer tried to catch the fox and the farmer got the dogs and the dogs saved the fox. The farmer tried to kill the fox.* Similarly, another child aged six said, *I saw a story What's Up Duck and they were fighting on the ship, and Bugs Bunny was fighting.* All children indicated that no-one could get hurt in a cartoon because they were only drawings or made of plasticine and it was inferred from this comment that children had learned this information from the earlier activity about animated films. Children excitedly discussed how cartoons were made and how cartoons made it look like people were fighting. It was clear from these discussions that children had a good understanding of the fantasy nature of cartoon violence.

Children were shown a videotaped example of cartoon violence from **Sleeping Beauty**. The scenes were shown first at normal speed, then rewound and shown frame by frame so that children could see the individual drawings. At the conclusion of the activity, when asked how people made cartoons with fighting in them, one five year old boy said: *someone draws the pictures of people fighting and then takes a photo of them and they join them together to make a story.*

The activity provided the children with an understanding of violence in animated stories and this might reduce their fears about similar events in the future. However, a discussion with children indicated that cartoons would probably still make them sad or frightened even though they knew that the fighting was not real. If children are emotionally involved in a

story, then it is likely that they will be affected by frightening events in it. As such media education may only partially (if at all) help children cope with media induced fears.

(vi) Activity 6: Frightening characters

The aim of activity 6 was to show through example how frightening characters are created for the audio visual media using make-up, wigs and masks. It was believed that if children were aware of how frightening characters in the media were created, then children would not be so frightened of similar characters in the future.

At the beginning of the activity, children were shown four photographs of potentially frightening characters from television and asked whether any of the characters frightened them. Several children in each of the age levels indicated that the characters were frightening, with most children reporting that the characters having human characteristics were the most frightening of all. For example, the werewolf character appeared frightening to many children, as did the goblin character from Never Ending Story. Photographs A and B (illustrated below), were found to be the most frightening characters to most children of the four-to-eight year old age group.

A. Werewolf from **Teen Wolf.**

B. Character from **The Never Ending Story.**

C. Rock-biter from **The Never Ending Story.**

D. Witch from **Sleeping Beauty.**

FIGURE 9.2: Characters perceived to be frightening to four-to-eight year old children.

Following a general discussion about the characters and about the children's particular ways of coping with fear while they were viewing something that is frightening, children were invited to participate in an activity that would teach them about how frightening characters are made for television and the movies. Children then proceeded to create an old woman or witch using a mask, wig, old clothing, false fingernails and plastic spiders. One child volunteered to become the witch and the make-up was applied with the children watching and helping the teacher. Figure 9.3 illustrates the frightening character created by children at the independent non-Catholic school. A short videotape of a dramatic story followed the activity and children watched the story on television immediately after.

FIGURE 9.3: Frightening character created by prep children at the independent non-Catholic school as part of the media activities pilot program.

The activity enabled children to demystify the process of creating frightening television characters and thus was perceived to be an appropriate method of reducing children's fears to similar characters in the future. No children were frightened by the activity or by seeing the character on television afterwards. A brief discussion linked the activity to similar characters on television, video and in the movies.

Children were asked to discuss the activity with their parents and talk about ways that help reduce fear when viewing television. Later discussions with children indicated that most children 'hid' when something frightening was on television and only one child said that she changed to another channel if there was something frightening on television.

Several weeks later, during the child observations at the homes of ten children, it was found that merely showing children how frightening characters are created is not enough to eliminate fear of similar characters in at least some of the children. The observational assessments indicated that two children were extremely frightened by videos containing frightening characters and almost all the other children engaged in fear behaviour or reported fear to the researcher. There is no way of knowing whether the strategy helped some of the children cope with the frightening contents of the videos. It is likely however, that the education strategy (as used here) is not enough by itself to prevent children from being frightened by the frightening contents - for reasons already discussed. Further research needs to be undertaken to determine alternative methods of reducing children's fear of media characters.

(vii) Activity 7: Transformational characters

The objective of the activity was to show children how transformational characters are created by the media, in the hope that such activities would reduce children's fear of similar characters in the future.

Using black fur, make-up and a wig, children were shown how an actor was transformed from a human person into a werewolf. This was done stage by stage, videotaping each new state of appearance, resulting in a short video of a person turning into a werewolf before the audience's eyes. The deconstruction of a media process enabled the children to demystify a potentially frightening television experience in the safety of a school classroom environment. No children were frightened by the experience and the activity created much discussion and excitement.

The homework activity consisted of a six illustration sheet of an identical male human face and instructions asking children to recreate the stages used to create the werewolf in the

classroom. The worksheet included hints on dealing with frightening characters for discussion with parents.

None of the children had difficulty with the class activity or the homework activity. Children understood that the werewolf was created in a similar way to an animated film and many of the children noted the similarity between the cartoon film and the transformation. But although children understood the concept of transformational characters on television, as with the previous activity it is unlikely that this form of education would banish all children's fear reactions to such media images in the future.

(viii) Activity 8: Live action drama

Activity 8 was designed to highlight the difference between events that occur in real life and events that occur on television drama and which are assumed by children to represent real life. The survey findings indicated that infant children were confused by television drama, with many believing that what they saw on television drama was actually true.

Children were asked to recall the events that occurred from the time they woke up until the time they arrived at school that day, in correct sequence. They were shown a television clip from **Man about the House** in which the characters awake and arrive at the breakfast table. The children were asked to recall events that were not shown on television, but which obviously must have occurred prior to the characters arriving at the breakfast table. All age groups had no difficulty recalling the missing events (e.g. getting dressed, going to the bathroom, walking to the breakfast room).

Following general discussion about why stories are edited in the media, children role played events that occur in real life, such as going to the hairdresser, going to the doctor or dentist and working at school. Following the activities and discussion, children were given a worksheet in which they were asked to record the morning's events from the time of waking up till the time of arriving at the school. Nine spaces were provided for pictorial or written work and children had no difficulty completing this task. The activity sheet was then discussed in terms of real life experiences and television's representation of real life experiences.

The activity successfully illustrated to children the way in which the media edit stories and the reason why editing takes place.

(ix) Activity 9: True stories

The objective of activity 9 was to get children to differentiate between fact and fiction in the media by looking for clues which suggest that the information is true or false. The survey results indicated that children were often confused by media messages and as a result had difficulty differentiating between live action drama and news stories. Many children perceived the news to be pretend stories.

As an introduction to the activity children were shown an assortment of factual information and fiction information from various media sources. They were asked about the origin of the news on television and this was discussed in relation to their own classroom news sessions, in which each child tells the class about something that has recently happened in his/her family.

Following on from the general introductory discussion, children were read two stories about fires. One story was about Fireman Sam putting out a fire at Bella's cafe, and the other was about a fire which burnt down a local school. Children were asked to indicate which was the true story and discuss why they thought the story was true. It was clear from the discussions that children looked for clues like the type of illustration (the school fire, for example was illustrated by a black and white photograph of the burnt out school and the storybook illustrations were cartoon type pictures in bold colours). They also believed that the newspaper item suggested that the item was real simply because it was printed in the newspaper. To infant children - and to many others - the newspaper tells the truth and storybooks tell pretend stories. Furthermore, infant children perceived the newspaper story as true because of the names of proper people and places that they had heard of. Finally, the newspaper story was perceived as true because many children had seen the story on the television news. All this evidence suggested to the children that the story was true. This confirms that children deductively analyze the information presented to them in an attempt to decide whether the information is true or false.

The stories were followed by the production of a television news bulletin by the children. Some of the children took on the role of reporter, while others took the role of newsreader or weather person, camera person, or set designer. Children recorded their news broadcasts and replayed the video. A discussion about the relationship of their own news broadcast to the regular news broadcast on television followed, with children making comparisons such as, *both news broadcasts were real, both broadcasts had real people* , etc.

The activity was enthusiastically received by all age groups and it appeared to be successful in that it made children think about the nature of information that is presented to them by the media.

8. Parental and teacher evaluation of the media activities

At the conclusion of the mass media activities, parents were provided with an evaluation sheet asking for general comments about their children's reaction to the mass media program (see Appendix B. 6). Similarly, teachers were asked to complete an evaluation sheet (see Appendix B. 7). They had also throughout the five week experimental period, consulted and discussed points of interest with the researcher and reported problems and comments from students and parents.

(i) Parental evaluation of the mass media program

All the few parents who responded to the evaluation (N=16) indicated that their children had enjoyed the media experiences. Their comments reflected their child's interest in the program, and increase in family discussions about the media, greater awareness of events in the media, reduction in media related fears, understanding of stunts and special effects on television, awareness of make-up on media characters, defining what is real and 'fake'.

(ii) Teacher Evaluation

Teachers were provided with an evaluation sheet asking them to comment about the activities in the mass media program. It was necessary to adapt the activities to suit the age level of the kindergarten age children, although with the remaining classes the activities undertaken were appropriate for the age/stage of the children, according to teacher

responses. All teachers indicated that the activities were loved by the children and had no difficulty stimulating the children's interest. The teachers found the activities easy to teach, although two teachers indicated that they lacked skills in using the appropriate equipment and were concerned that they would not get the ideas and concepts across properly even though they indicated that the program was very detailed and provided them with sufficient information to teach the course. When asked whether they thought the children benefited from the activities, teachers indicated that the activities generated much discussion. One teacher said:

> *It was amazing that some of the things we take for granted that kids know concerning tv were totally misunderstood or confused by them. Prior to the program children tended to take everything that they saw on tv as so real - it actually happened to those people.*

Teachers felt that the homework activities were enjoyed and beneficial for the children, particularly the older children. For example, the kindergarten teacher noted that the activities were *not as successful for this age level (kinder) some parents felt they had to do a bit of them.* However the aim of the activities was to gain parental involvement and therefore this was perceived to be an important section of the mass media program. The kindergarten teacher felt the teaching sessions were long enough, but other classes felt they needed more time to cover the amount of work. Teachers were obviously pleased with the video examples and materials provided for experimentation and all teachers believed that the subject was of considerable value to the children in their class. Teachers commented that in the future they would like to involve parents, working in small workshop classes in the classroom, and in general teachers said that parents were very supportive of the program.

9. Discussion of Media education pilot study

The media education program was intended to evaluate the kinds of exercises which were perceived to be necessary as a result of the main survey responses. The program consisted of nine activities which were administered to seven classes (K-2) over a five week period. Many of the activities were designed to reduce or prevent behavioural and emotional responses, and this makes evaluation difficult. Some areas, such as children's fear responses to the media, could be partially assessed following the media activities through home observational reports.

Of particular encouragement to this study was that parents supported the school-based media education program. For example, many of the parents helped children with the media homework by helping children find newspaper advertisements and by driving them around the street to find (and helping children to identify) street advertising. Many of the parents indicated that their children had discussed the activities with them at home. In a follow-up questionnaire, parents indicated that their children had enjoyed the media activities and said that in their opinion their children learned important information from the media education contents.

The program was also well received by the children themselves and their teachers. In particular, lessons about fighting, violence and make-up were of considerable interest to children. In the follow-up teacher questionnaire, teachers stressed the importance of matching activities to suit the age of students although, with one exception, the activities were perceived to be appropriate to the age group for which they were designed. Some of the teachers indicated that they felt they did not have sufficient skills and competency in the area of media education to teach children about the media. This indicated that some training would be required to ensure that teachers were confident enough to implement such courses in the classroom.

In relation to children's fear reactions to the media, this study found that even after media intervention activities at school, children's fear reactions to frightening television contents were not completely eradicated in the home viewing situation. But it was impossible to assess what, if any, improvement had occurred. The child observations were carried out following the media education program and, although the media activities taught children about how the media creates frightening characters and involved children in fantasy character creation using masks, make-up and wigs, many of the children suffered fear reactions to the video content; two children suffered significant distress. This suggests that media education alone may not be sufficient to reduce children's fear reactions to the media and further supports the need for media education for parents, particularly in relation to selection of media content for children. If parents of infant children are aware of the influence of media on their children they might help to control viewing situations in the home to a greater extent than is presently done. Perhaps if this education is done through the school - by involving parents in workshops, by encouraging them to work on media projects at home - with their children and by relaying information about media activities to the home, parents might become more involved in their children's media use.

Chapter 10

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

We should all be concerned about the future because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there.
C. F. Kettering (1876-1958) American Engineer.

The purpose of this research was to determine whether there was a need for media education for infant children. The study was based on the theoretical assumption that all forms of entertainment media influence the everyday behaviour of infant children. The literature review indicated that almost all the empirical research had concentrated on the effects of *television* on children's behaviour, to the extent that the impact of other forms of entertainment media on children was ignored. In previous research, infant children's everyday imitative use and understanding of the media has largely been ignored. Furthermore, most of the research has centred around older children (with the exception of the work on television education at the University of Kansas and Yale University in America) - perhaps because the older age group have reading and writing skills and can therefore complete questionnaires by themselves which makes the research task much easier and less time consuming. Almost all the research conducted on young children has been based on the perceptions of parents rather than the perceptions of the children themselves.

The research used a psycho-sociological framework which aimed to achieve an increased understanding of infant children's relationship with the entertainment media by gathering and analysing the perceptions of parents, teachers and children through questionnaires, interviews and observations. The methodology used was a unique means of researching children's understanding of the media and was perceived to be a significant step forward

from earlier research. An important element of this research has been the attempt to survey the perceptions of children and then compare their responses with the perceptions of parents and teachers. It was evident that there was often a large discrepancy between what children say they understand or feel and what parents and teachers perceive. The significance of this finding is that many of the research findings that are accepted today are based on experimental studies or the perceptions of parents, which may have provided us with an inaccurate picture.

The results of the study clearly indicate that infant children are more likely to be influenced by television than any other media source. In other words, television was more likely to be the source of imitation than any other form of media; television was more likely to cause fears than any other form of media; television was more likely to be the cause of bad dreams and nightmares than any other form of media; and television was more likely to be the source of children's questions about its contents than any other form of media. However, in highlighting these findings, it should be pointed out that this research questions the necessity and validity of offering effects-based media education to infant children.

In terms of infant children's imitation of the media this study found that there was very little evidence to suggest that imitative behaviour was harmful or antisocial. Therefore, media education to reduce potentially harmful or negative behaviour was not included in detail in the pilot study - nor should it be a basis for media education generally.

Generally speaking, this study does not support the view that children need media education about television reality and fantasy. Almost all of the children in the study had a good understanding of fantasy characters and events when those characters and events were clearly indicated as non-human. When the media portrayed fantasy using live actors and pseudo-factual information, some children's understanding of what was true became blurred. And where events appeared to be real - that is they could happen in real life - some children became confused. This finding supported existing theories and commonly held views regarding children's understanding of television content and was included in the media pilot study. There was evidence to suggest that the planned media activities helped children distinguish between fantasy and reality situations on television, but for some other younger children media education did not help them.

This study indicated that many children were experiencing strong fear reactions to frightening television and video contents. This was seen to be an important component of the media education program. What was clear from the pilot study however was that,

contrary to the suggestions made in the propositions, media education about how frightening characters were created did not stop children from being frightened of media contents. Therefore it was concluded that classroom media education of this kind was unsuitable for reducing children's media induced fears.

In saying that this research does not support the concept of formal media education at the infant school level, it does not in any way suggest that as parents and teachers we should ignore the impact of media on young children. Children should be encouraged to learn, discuss and evaluate the media. What is clear from this study is that infant children are frightened by media contents. Although this research found that school-initiated attempts to reduce such fears failed, this problem might be more appropriately dealt with in the home environment. Perhaps the best way to overcome media induced fears is to educate parents about the need to carefully monitor and select television and video programs for young children. The home environment is probably the most appropriate place to deal with emotional problems of this nature.

In conclusion, this research suggests that many of the current media education programs that have been planned for children, or are being used with children in some Australian states, are not only inappropriate - but may be unnecessary. With teaching time being so precious in classrooms these days, it is important that such time is efficiently used. There is little point in teaching children about issues they already understand. We should be more concerned with finding out what children already know and what they need to know, and building an education on that basis.

Suggestions for further research

This research has provided considerable information regarding infant children's media relationships and media education at the infant level, about which little is known. In achieving this end the research raised several questions which warrant further investigation but were not within the scope of this research to answer. For example, there is a need for further research to examine the disparity between children's perceptions and the perceptions of parents. This is an important area of research because in many instances researchers have accepted parents' views as accurately reflecting their children's and, as this research has indicated, such acceptance may not be appropriate. Perhaps one way of examining these differences could be to question parents and children separately and then interview

them together on the combined results, and to examine through discussions the basis of the disparities.

Another area that requires more research is children's fears of the media in relation to other fears. For example, this research indicated that infant children were frightened by particular images on television, but perhaps other research could focus on the relationship of media-induced fears to other everyday fears. In particular, longitudinal research of this nature would be useful to determine whether media-induced fears influence other fears or vice versa. Also in relation to children's fears, it would be interesting to see whether children's media-induced fears matched those of their parents over a period of time. Research suggests that children learn fears of spiders and so on from parents who are similarly frightened of such objects; therefore it would be interesting to see whether media-induced fears develop in similar relation to parental fears.

It would also be valuable to find the extent to which infant children perceive storybook characters to be representations of real people. This research was limited to television and video characters because of the number of questions involved in the surveys, and so no in-depth work was carried out on children's understanding of storybook characters.

This research also found, during observational assessment of children while viewing television and video, that some of the children responded to the media characters and others appeared to empathise with media characters. For example, in one case a child 'jumped' in fright when the character on the screen jumped and responded with the same actions as the television characters as the story progressed. Other children, however, interacted para-socially with the characters. There seemed to be different levels of interaction taking place while children viewed the same stories, which may suggest that - depending on the level of interaction taking place - children may be more or less affected by the contents. For example, empathic behaviour may result in more emotional behaviour than para-social interaction. This is an important area to examine because it may provide clues to suggest ways and means of helping children cope with media-induced fears.

Finally, this research found that when four year old children had previously seen a live dramatic production of a 'cartoon story', they were confused when presented with cartoon images of a character. These children indicated that the representation was of a real person. It would appear that when they viewed the photograph they thought about the live person on stage, thus confusing their perception. The general problem appears to be that some stories are quite often seen in both film/television/drama (live action) and cartoon formats -

for example, Rambo, and more recently the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle phenomenon. This is an important area of research because if children perceive cartoon characters to be real then there may be a greater danger of them imitating their behaviour because they perceive the behaviour to be real and possible. There is also a danger that children might be more frightened of such characters, because they perceive them to be out in the real world.

In concluding, it should be pointed out that there will always be a need to research children's use of the media. The media change rapidly with developments in new technology. Larger television screens and 3-D technology might significantly affect children's emotional responses to television and so there is a need for continual research to keep us aware of the impact of the media on children. Media products change rapidly too - often bringing with them an upsurge in cult-behaviour - as we have recently witnessed with Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. We must remember that infant children are imaginative, curious, imitative and eager to learn about the world. But we must also remember that they are fragile in that they are developing emotional senses and building a foundation of moral reasoning that will form the basis of their adult life.

Bibliography

The following resources were used in the preparation of this thesis. Those not used directly in the text were used as background reading prior to and during the development of the research. As was mentioned in the early chapters of this thesis, little research has yet been conducted on media education, and even though there has been considerable research into the effects of television on older children, little has been published about the effects of various forms of entertainment media on infant children.

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VOLUME 2

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3. Number of children (3-12 years) frightened by television content at some time.
4. Percentage of children (3-8 years) frightened by television and area.
5. Percentage of children (3-8 years) reporting the 'type' of incident as frightening according to area.
6. Percentage of children (3-8 years) reporting type of program as frightening (cartoon, news/documentary, adventure, drama) according to area.
7. Percentage of children (3-8 years) reporting strategy used according to area.

Children's fear intensity: Major study

A1. Physical aggression/violence involving more than one person.

A2. Physical aggression/violence involving one person.

A3. Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal: A

A4. Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal:B

A5. Impending danger of an accident.

A6. After effects of an accident.

A7. Destruction of objects through remote aggression and violence.

A8. Destruction of objects through physical human aggression and violence.

A9. Destruction of objects through natural causes (flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane).

A10. Directed verbal aggression.

A11. Non-violent images: Appearance of character - human type.

A12. Non-violent images: Appearance of character - non-human type.

A13. Non-violent images: Appearance of character - transformations.

A14. Non-violent images: Abandonment of a child.

Children's understanding of television/video fantasy and reality

A15. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (a) whether the child or children in question believe that cartoon characters e.g. people in Paddington Bear or rats in The Pied Piper are real human beings and real rats?

A16. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (b) whether the child or children in question believe that magical effects e.g. Superman flying; animals flying in The Never Ending Story can happen in real life.

A17. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (c) whether the child or children in question believe that actors or characters e.g. Nurse Loveday in A Country Practice; families in Neighbours continue to be those people or characters in their real life (when not on television).

A18. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (d) whether the child or children in question believe that ugly creatures e.g. creatures in Dr. Who; Vincent the Beast in Beauty and the Beast; and Frankenstein actually exist in the real world.

A19. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (e) whether the child or children in question believe that actors fighting in television stories are just pretending.

A20. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (f) whether the child or children in question believe that people injured in television stories are just pretending.

A21. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (g) whether the child or children in question believe that people fighting in television news items and sport are just pretending.

A22. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (h) whether the child or children in question believe that people injured in television news items are just pretending.

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A24. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (j) whether the child or children in question believe that news stories are true stories.

A25. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (k) whether the child or children in question believe that normal human beings could participate in dangerous activities e.g. falling from buildings, car crashes etc. normally performed by stuntmen without being harmed.

A26. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (l) whether the child or children in question believe that actors and people on television stay inside the television set (or disappear) when you turn off the television.

A27. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (m) whether the child or children in question believe that Sooty, Sweep and Sue (hand puppets) are real human beings.

A28. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (n) whether the child or children in question believe that Fat Cat is a real cat.

A29. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (o) whether the child or children in question believe that talking cartoon animals e.g. Dot and the Koala are real talking animals.

A30. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (p) whether the child or children in question believe Gumby (an animated clay character) is a real person.

A31. Parents' teachers' and children's responses to: (q) whether the child or children in question believe that advertisements are designed to influence people to buy particular products.

A32. Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (r) whether the child or children in question believe that children on television e.g. Cosby children in The Cosby Show; Chloe or other children in A Country Practice are happier than themselves.

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Appendix A - Teacher's Pilot Study

School:.....

Age range of children:.....Grade:.....

Children's favourite television programs (top 3 only)

....

Have the children ever been frightened by something on television?

YES.....(no of children) NO.....(number of chn)

If YES, what type of content frightened them? Example of program.

cartoon..... eg. .....

news/documentary..... eg.....

advertising..... eg.....

drama..... eg.....

Type of incident that was most frightening.

violent act (aggression).....(No. of chn)

scary person/monster .....

possible event (something that could happen,
eg. child left on own, intruder etc).....

accident (car/plane).....

other.....

What do the children do if they are scared of something on television.

turn off television.....
cry .....
cover face/eyes.....
go to another room .....
other .....
sat with parent/sister/brother .....

PILOT STUDY: RESULTS. (October, 1988)

Schools participating: Sandy Bay Infant School, Moonah Primary School, North Chigwell Primary School, Campbell Street Primary School.

TABLE 1:

Children's favourite television programs according to ages (3-8 years) and area (Sandy Bay)

AGE:	Favourite	2nd Favourite	3rd Favourite
3-4 years	Sesame St.	Insp. Gadget	Young Talent Time
4-5 years	Young Talent Team	Sesame Street	Playschool
5-6 years	Young Talent Team	Secret Valley	Nil reported
	Hey, Hey it's Sat.	Monkey Magic	Batman
6-7 years	McGyver*	Bush Tucker Man	Sooty
7-8 years	Young Talent Team	McGyver*	Bugs Bunny

TABLE 2:

Children's favourite television programs according to ages (3-8 years) and area.

North Chigwell/ Moonah/ Campbell Street	Favourite	2nd Favourite	3rd Favourite
3-4 years	-	-	-
4-5 years	Ballet Sebastian	Playschool	Inspector Gadget
5-6 years	Punky Brewster	Insp. Gadget	McGyver*/Neighb.
	Gem/Young TT.	McGyver*	Airwolf*/Punky
6-7 years	Monkey Magic	Sale of Century	Kaleidescope
	McGyver*	Coming Up Next	Punky Brewster
7-8 years	Hey Dad	Punky Brewster	Alf
	Hey Dad	Airwolf*	Alf
	Neighbours	McGyver*	Airwolf*

Table 3: Number of children (3-12 years) frightened by television content at some time. All socio-economic groups. N=457

55.5% frightened 44.4% not frightened

52.1% of children 3-8 years, frightened by television content.

47.8% of children 3-8 years, not frightened by television content.

(n=320)

63.5% of children 8-12 years, frightened by television content.

36.5% of children 8-12 years, not frightened by television content.

(n=137)

Table 4: Percentage of children (3-8 years) frightened by television and area.

AREA:	Frightened	Not frightened	
Sandy Bay	62.04	37.96	(N=137)
Moonah/...	43.63	56.3	(N=204)

Table 5: Percentage of children (3-8 years) reporting the 'type' of incident as frightening according to area.

AREA:	Type of incident reported as frightening.				
	Violent act	character's appearance	possible event	accident	other
Sandy Bay (N=100)	34.0	40.0	12.0	13.0	1.0
Moonah/... (N=97)	26.8	27.8	11.3	31.9	2.0

Table: 6: Percentage of children (3-8 years) reporting type of program as frightening (cartoon, news/documentary, advertisement, drama) according to area.

AREA:	Program Type				
	cartoon	news/ documentary	advertise- ment	drama	
Sandy Bay	44.6	26.1	4.6	24.6	(N=65)
Moonah/...	7.1	28.5	17.8	46.4	(N=56)

Table 7: Percentage of children (3-8 years) reporting strategy used according to area.

AREA:	Strategy used in frightening situation				
	turn off TV	cry	cover face/eyes	leave room	sit by friend
Sandy Bay	23.6	7.0	26.3	19.3	20.1
Moonah/...	17.5	8.3	27.5	20.8	15.0

*Discrepancy in figures due to 'other' responses, 3.5 and 10.8 respectively.

University of Tasmania

CENTENARY
1890–1990

Department of
Teacher Education
Telephone (002) 202516
(002) 202566
Facsimile (002) 202569

Sandy Bay Campus
Churchill Avenue
Sandy Bay Hobart
Correspondence
GPO Box 252C
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Australia
Telex AA 58150

1st May, 1989

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Ph.D. student in the Centre for Education at the University studying the media's effects on infant children and the relevance and/or appropriateness of a media education program for infant children.

The research, based on a Tasmanian sample of infant children (4-8 year old), infant teachers, and parents examines the following:

(a) television and video viewing habits of infant children;
(b) children's emotional arousal while using various types of media;
(c) children's imitative use of media messages;
(d) children's ability to interpret, judge and comprehend the content of media messages;
(e) parents and teachers personal opinions regarding media's effects on children; and
(f) parents and teachers opinions regarding the perceived need for media education for infant children.

Information from the interviews, questionnaires and case studies would provide the basis for a range of media education activities which would then be implemented and evaluated in several infant schools during Term 2 of 1989.

There has been considerable public concern about the negative effects of social learning from the media (particularly television and videos) but more recently studies have expressed concern over the emotional reactions of young children to media violence. My preliminary research with parents, children and Risdon Prison inmates support the view that infant children do not understand the media, they are frightened by the media, they imitate the media and parents (including male prisoners), and teachers are strongly in favour of media education of some kind for young children. Furthermore, parents have strongly indicated that they would like an input into any such course.

Little research, (in Australia or overseas) has focussed on infant children's responses to the media and although there has been an attempt to implement media education in some infant schools throughout Australia, there has been no attempt to base such curricula on the research finding and/or the "needs" of such children. I strongly believe that this research will provide infant teachers and curriculum planners throughout Australia with sound theoretical and practical information on which to base media activities.

As part of my research I wish to ask infant teachers, parents and children their views about mass media and consequently I am writing to you for permission to circulate the attached **Teacher** and **Parent** questionnaires to: (a) the infant teacher indicated on the enclosed "Teachers Questionnaire" and (b) **ANY THREE** parents from the selected infant teacher's class.

In the event that you, your staff members and parents are willing to participate in the research I have enclosed the Teacher and Parent Questionnaires (unsealed for your inspection) that should be **completed and returned to me by Friday 12th May 1989. If for some reason the 'nominated' teacher or parents are unwilling to participate in the research, it would be appreciated if he/she would pass the material on to another infant teacher or other parents (K-2 only) in your school who might complete the questionnaires.** Stamped self-addressed envelopes are included for the return of the Questionnaires. If you, your staff and parents do NOT wish to participate in the research, it would be appreciated if you would return the enclosed materials to me as soon as possible.

The research is supported by Dr. Patricia Edgar, Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation, who has written a letter (see attached copy) to infant teachers and parents to encourage them to take the time to complete the questionnaire.

If you would like further information regarding the research, please do not hesitate to contact me (reverse charges) on 25 1003 (after 3.00 p.m.)

Yours sincerely,

Kay Chung (Mrs)
Ph. D. Student.

Enc. Copy of Questionnaires for infant teacher and parent with supporting letters.

University of Tasmania

CENTENARY
1890–1990

Department of
Teacher Education
Telephone (002) 202510
(002) 202566
Facsimile (002) 202569

Sandy Bay Campus
Churchill Avenue
Sandy Bay Hobart
Correspondence
GPO Box 252C
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Australia
Telex AA 58150

11th April, 1989.

Dear Infant Teacher,

I am a Ph.D. student in the Centre for Education at the University studying the media's effects on infant children (K-2) and the relevance and/or appropriateness of a media education activities for infant children.

The research, based on a Tasmanian sample of infant children (4-8 year old), infant teachers, and parents examines the following:

(a) television and video viewing habits of infant children;
(b) children's emotional arousal while using various types of media;
(c) children's imitative use of media messages;
(d) children's ability to interpret, judge and comprehend the content of media messages;
(e) parents and teachers personal opinions regarding media's effects on children; and
(f) parents and teachers opinions regarding the perceived need for media education for infant children.

Information from the interviews, questionnaires and case studies would provide the basis for a range of media education activities which would then be implemented and evaluated in several infant schools during Term 2 of 1989.

Having been involved in television research in Tasmania for the past ten years, as well as being an infant teacher previously employed with the State Education Department, I strongly believe that television and video research must move beyond the point of looking at media's negative effects.

As part of a larger study that attempts to help young children (K-2) understand the complex task of interpreting media messages, the attached questionnaire for infant teachers is designed to seek information that will give us a better understanding of the degree to which children are emotionally aroused by media messages; the amount and ways in which children use the media in their everyday life; and their general understanding of television and video content. With such information we can then proceed to develop, if necessary, some "needs" based media activities. Such activities would be trialled in Tasmanian schools this year. Your responses from the attached questionnaire will determine whether such activities are necessary and your comments regarding media education would enable YOU to have a valuable input into any such activities.

THIS RESEARCH IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT AND IS REFLECTED IN THE ATTACHED LETTERS FROM THE TASMANIAN DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION, MR. K. AXTON (WHO HAS GIVEN PERMISSION FOR THIS RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED) AND DR. PATRICIA EDGAR, DIRECTOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION, WHO SIMILARLY SUPPORTS THIS RESEARCH AND APPEALS TO YOU ON MY BEHALF TO TAKE THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

If you wish to discuss this research in more detail or have any queries regarding the questions, please do not hesitate to telephone me (reverse charges) any evening on 251003.

It would be appreciated if you could complete the questionnaire by **Friday 21st April** and return it to me in the stamped self-addressed envelope immediately. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Yours most sincerely,

Kay Chung (Mrs)
Ph. D. Student, Centre for Education.

Enc. Supporting letters from Tasmanian Director-General for Education, Mr. K. Axton and Dr. Patricia Edgar, Director, Australian Children's Television Foundation.

Education Department

TASMANIA

116 Bathurst Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. G.P.O. Box 169B, Hobart 7001—Telephone: 002 30 7011
Facsimile: 002 31 1576

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE
FILE No PMW1822

IF TELEPHONING OR CALLING
ASK FOR

5th April, 1989

Mrs. Kay Chung,
Centre for Education,
University of Tasmania,
GPO Box 252C,
HOBART Tas 7001

Dear Mrs. Chung,

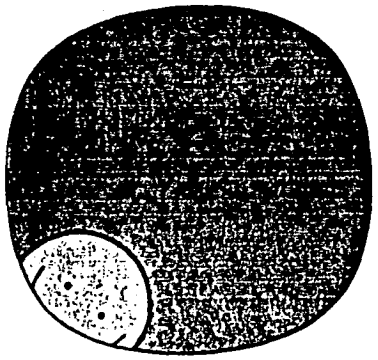
I have been advised by the Consultative Research Committee that the research study proposed by you adheres to the guidelines that have been established and I am happy to give permission for the study to proceed in government schools.

You should understand that this permission does not mean that schools are required to participate. However, your study will obviously be seen as important by Principals and staff, particularly those involved with early childhood education, and I have no doubts that schools will be co-operative if it is at all possible.

I look forward to hearing of the results from your research.

Yours sincerely,

K. I. Axton,
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION.



THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION
199 Grattan Street,
Carlton, Victoria, 3053, Australia.
Telephone: (03) 342 0555
Telex: AA151378 KIDSTV
Fax: (03) 347 4194

March, 1989

Dear Teacher/Parent,

Research Questionnaire on Young Children

It is usually tempting when confronted with a questionnaire through the mail to put it to one side or toss it out and to consider it either a waste of time or an imposition on one's time.

The Australian Children's Television Foundation is an organisation which is developing high quality programs for Australian children. We need ongoing research information about young children and their needs and interests.

I am writing to you to ask for your support by filling in the attached questionnaire. The research which is being undertaken by Kay Chung from the Centre for Educational Studies at the University of Tasmania will be valuable research which could influence the television material made available to your children and future children.

There has been little research in Australia or overseas that has focused on infant children's responses to the media and I believe that this research will provide infant teachers, curriculum planners and television producers throughout Australia with useful theoretical and practical information.

I do hope you will be able to find time to support this research study.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Edgar

(Dr) Patricia Edgar
Director

Appendix B.1.

INFANT TEACHERS

MASS MEDIA QUESTIONNAIRE

April, 1989

This questionnaire relates to **your** personal opinions of (a) children's experiences with the mass media; and (b) your attitude to media education for infants. Please answer questions according to your general findings **THIS YEAR.**

The Questionnaire is divided into five sections which are outlined as follows:

Part A:	general information about your students and school
Part B:	student's imitative use of media messages,
Part C:	student's ability to interpret, judge and comprehend the content of media messages,
Part D:	your personal opinions regarding media's effects on children,
Part E:	your personal opinions regarding the perceived need for media education for infant children.

If you have any problems or queries relating to the questions, please call me (reverse charges) any evening on (002) 251003.

Thank you for your interest.

Kay Chung (Mrs)
Centre for Education, University of Tasmania.

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION: (Circle the appropriate response)

1. Please indicate whether you are:

(a) male
(b) female

2. Please indicate the **name, type** and **location** of the school at which you currently teach:

School:.....Type:(State/Private/Catholic,etc).....

Location:(Suburb/Town).....

6. Please circle the **median (average) age** range of your students: 4 5 6 7 8 years

7. Number of males/females in your class:

(a) number of male students .....
(b) number of female students.....

8. Composition of class: (ie. Prep; Prep/1; K, Prep/1)

.....

3. Does the school at which you currently teach have a television set in good working order?

(a) yes
(b) no

4. Does the school at which you currently teach have video/media equipment? (Please tick).

[ ] Video cassette recorder Type:.....
[ ] Video camera and accessories Type:.....
[ ] Microphone
[ ] Tape recorder
[ ] Photocopier

5. Is the equipment in good working order?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) don't know

PART B: YOUR STUDENTS IMITATIVE USE OF TELEVISION, VIDEO AND OTHER MEDIA:

9. **Have you ever observed children in your class discussing, imitating or using experiences from television or video (not school broadcasts) in their daily activities.** (Please do not include teacher initiated requests). Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the children's **behaviour** (eg. painting of Batman fighting; singing the "Vegemite ad.") in the space provided.

Example of BEHAVIOUR:

(a) drawing/paintings: never/sometimes/often eg.....
(b) role playing (pretending to be others): never/sometimes/often eg.....
(c) telling stories/ discussions: never/sometimes/often eg.....
(d) playing (fighting): never/sometimes/often eg.....
(e) singing (ad. jingles): never/sometimes/often eg.....

10. Have you ever observed the children in your class **discussing, imitating or using experiences from STORYBOOKS** in their daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the children's **behaviour** (eg. "Cinderella" dancing; pretending to be Captain Pugwash fighting with a sword) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings:	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions:	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (theme song):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

11. Have you ever observed the children in your class **discussing, imitating or using experiences from CASSETTE TAPES with the accompanying STORYBOOK** in their daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the children's **behaviour** (eg. singing the song from "Snow White"; pretending to be Peter Pan flying) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings:	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions:	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (theme song):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

12. Have you ever observed the children in your class **discussing, imitating or using experiences from MOVIES AT THE CINEMA** in their daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the children's **behaviour** (eg. drawing of Bambi running from the hunters; pretending to be Pippi Longstocking scrubbing the floor) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings:	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions:	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (theme song):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

13. Have you ever observed the children in your class **discussing, imitating or using experiences from LIVE DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS** (eg. Peter Pan, Seven Little Australians) in their daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the children's **behaviour** (eg. singing Captain Hook's song; telling the story of "The Secret Garden" to others) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings:	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions:	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (theme song):	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

PART C: YOUR STUDENT'S ABILITY TO INTERPRET, (CLARIFY OR EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF) JUDGE AND MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT THE MEDIA PROCESSES AND/OR CONTENT.

14. Have the children in your class ever asked you questions about **how or why** something happened in:

(a)	television	often/not	often/never
(b)	storybooks	often/not	often/never
(c)	videos	often/not	often/never
(d)	cassette tapes	often/not	often/never
(e)	cinema movies	often/not	often/never
(f)	live drama	often/not	often/never

15. With regard to television and video: (Please circle the appropriate response).

(a) do **you** think that your students believe that:
cartoon characters (eg. 'people' in "Paddington Bear", 'rats' in "The Pied Piper") are real human beings and real rats.....yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(b) do **you** think that your students believe that:
"magical" effects (Superman flying; animals flying in "Never Ending Story") can happen in real life ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(c) do **you** think that your students believe that:
actors or characters (eg. Nurse Loveday in "A Country Practice"; families in "Neighbours") continue to be those people or characters in their real life (when not on television) .....yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(d) do **you** think that your students believe that:
ugly creatures (eg. creatures in "Dr. Who"; Vincent the Beast in "Beauty and the Beast" and "Frankenstein") actually exist in the real world ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(e) do **you** think that your students believe that:
actors fighting in television stories
are just pretending ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(f) do **you** think that your students believe that:
people injured in television stories
are just pretending ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(g) do **you** think that your students believe that:
people fighting in television news items
and sport are just pretending ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(h) do **you** think that your students believe that:
people injured in television news items are just
pretending ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(i) do **you** think that your students believe that:
live dramatic stories on television
("A Country Practice"; "G.P.")
are true stories ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(j) do **you** think that your students believe that:
news stories are true stories ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(k) do **you** think that your students believe that:
normal human beings could participate in
dangerous activities (eg. falling from buildings;
car crashes etc. normally performed by
stuntmen) without being harmed ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(l) do **you** think that your students believe that:
actors and people on television stay
inside the television set (or disappear)
when you turn off the television ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(m) do **you** think that your students believe that:
"Sooty", "Sweep" and "Sue" (hand puppets) are
real human beings ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(n) do **you** think that your students believe that:
"Fat Cat" is a real cat ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(o) do **you** think that your students believe that:
cartoon animals (eg. "Dot and the Koala")
are real "talking" animals ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(p) do **you** think that your students believe that:
"Gumby" and similar characters on "Gumby"
(an animated clay character)
are real people ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(q) do **you** think that your students believe that: advertisements (eg. "Twisties") are designed to influence people to buy particular products ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(r) do **you** think that your students believe that: children on television (Cosby children in "The Cosby Show"; Chloe or other children in "A Country Practice") are happier than themselves ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(s) do you think that your students believe that: people might be able to transform themselves into other things or characters (eg. from a person to a wolf; from a man to "The Incredible Hulk")..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

PART D: PERSONAL OPINIONS REGARDING MEDIA'S EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

16. Considering the wide range of students in your class with different personality, temperament, family background, tv/video viewing habits, etc, **do you feel that violent television and video programs MIGHT (at some stage in their life) have a negative (antisocial) effect on the behaviour of any of your students?**

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) maybe
(d) don't know

17. Some television and video programs, such as police, western and horror stories, contain considerable violent action. Do you feel that the violence in these programs leads to an increase in the amount of violence that occurs in your students' community.

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) don't know

18. Do you personally believe that criminally-minded people might use information from a television program or video to plan or commit a crime?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) maybe
(d) don't know

PART E: PERSONAL OPINIONS REGARDING THE PERCEIVED NEED FOR MEDIA EDUCATION FOR INFANT CHILDREN:

19. ***"The average Australian child at the age of 16 will have spent 17,500 hours in front of television and only 15,200 in school"*** (Tasmanian Education Department leaflet, 1979). Considering the above statistics, together with the findings that preschool and infant children are television's heaviest viewers, **do you personally believe that media education is necessary for young children (4-8 year old)?**

(a) yes
(b) no

20. If **yes**, by whom should it be taught?

(a) school
(b) parents
(c) both school and parents
(d) other .....

21. If media education was introduced at infant school level, do you feel that you have appropriate training and skill in that area for teaching it to your class?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) don't know

22. If yes to question 19, **rate the following topics** according to what you believe are the priority areas for media education with infants. For example, if you believe that "media production" is the most important area to be taught to infants, place a 1 in the box provided. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to this question I am concerned with your response in reference to your students needs in this area. Rate 1-5 only.

[ ] advertising in the media
[ ] development of the media in history
[ ] fact and fantasy in the media
[ ] influence of the media
[ ] purpose of the media
[ ] evaluation of the media
[ ] media production techniques
[ ] comparison of media products
[ ] other .....
[ ] other.....

23. **Why did you choose those areas as being important?** Please explain your reason and indicate the types of activities you might consider to be helpful to infant school children.

1. .....
.....
.....

2. .....
.....
.....
3. .....
.....
.....
4. .....
.....
.....
5. .....
.....
.....

24. Do you believe that infant media education should:

(a) cover all of the mass media (eg. television, radio, newspaper, magazine, video)
(b) concentrate on television and video only
(c) television only
(d) other (please specify)

25. Do you have reason to believe that any member of your class may have viewed what is commonly termed a **"video nasty"**?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) don't know

26. If yes, do you know the name of the video(s)? (Please list them below)

(a) .....
(b) .....
(c) .....

27. In the last year, did you offer media education or television education to your class?

(a) yes
(b) no

28. If yes, please outline the general aims and objectives and the topics you successfully covered and any points you might wish to mention about the topic.
.....
.....
.....

29. If you would like to add any other information about media education or children's experiences with the media, please feel free to include them in the space provided.
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much for your participation.

PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO ME IN THE STAMPED SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

University of Tasmania

CENTENARY
1890–1990

Department of
Teacher Education
Telephone (002) 202546
(002) 202566
Facsimile (002) 202569

Sandy Bay Campus
Churchill Avenue
Sandy Bay Hobart
Correspondence
GPO Box 252C
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Australia
Telex AA 58150

1st May, 1989

Dear Parent,

Are you aware that "the average Australian child at the age of 16 will have spent 17,500 hours in front of TV and only 15,200 hours in school"? (Tasmanian Education Department Leaflet, 1979). These figures, based on the average weekly television viewing habits of Australian children, indicate the value children place on entertainment television. But as well as giving children wonderful and exciting experiences, television and video also provides children with information about violence, hate, greed etc. There has been considerable public concern about the negative effects of television, and more recently studies have expressed concern over the emotional reactions of young children to media messages.

As part of a larger study that attempts to help young children understand the complex task of interpreting media messages, the attached questionnaire for parents is designed to seek information that will give us a better understanding of the degree to which children are emotionally aroused by media messages; the amount and ways in which children use the media in their everyday life; and their general understanding of television and video content. With such information we can then proceed to develop, if necessary, some "needs" based media activities. Such activities would be trialled in Tasmanian schools this year. Your responses from the attached questionnaire will determine whether such activities are necessary and your comments regarding media education would enable YOU to have a valuable input into any such activities.

THIS RESEARCH IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT AND IS REFLECTED IN THE ATTACHED LETTER FROM DR. PATRICIA EDGAR, DIRECTOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION, WHO SUPPORTS THIS RESEARCH AND APPEALS TO YOU ON MY BEHALF, TO TAKE THE TIME TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

IF FOR SOME REASON YOU DO NOT WISH TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE **PASS IT ON TO ANOTHER PARENT FROM YOUR CHILD'S CLASS,** AS ONLY THREE PARENTS FROM EACH SCHOOL THROUGHOUT TASMANIA HAVE BEEN SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Please remember that your individual responses are confidential and that the information you provide will give us a better understanding of your child's reactions to television and video, and also gives you the opportunity to do something constructive about it.

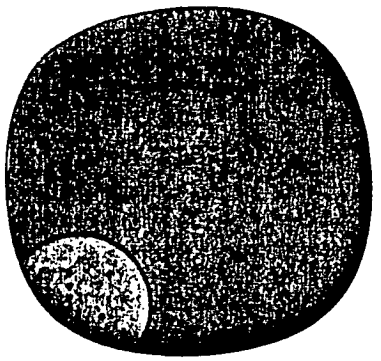
If you wish to discuss this research in more detail or have any queries regarding the questions, please do not hesitate to telephone me (reverse charges) any evening on 251003.

It would be appreciated if you could complete the questionnaire by **Friday 12th May, 1989** and return it to me in the stamped self-addressed envelope immediately. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Yours most sincerely,

Kay Chung (Mrs)
Ph. D. Student, Centre for Education.

Enc. Supporting letter from Dr. Patricia Edgar, Director, Australian Children's Television Foundation.
Questionnaire for Parents with stamped self-addressed return envelope.



THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION
199 Grattan Street,
Carlton, Victoria, 3053, Australia.
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Telex: AA151378 KIDSTV
Fax: (03) 347 4194

March, 1989

Dear Teacher/Parent,

Research Questionnaire on Young Children

It is usually tempting when confronted with a questionnaire through the mail to put it to one side or toss it out and to consider it either a waste of time or an imposition on one's time.

The Australian Children's Television Foundation is an organisation which is developing high quality programs for Australian children. We need ongoing research information about young children and their needs and interests.

I am writing to you to ask for your support by filling in the attached questionnaire. The research which is being undertaken by Kay Chung from the Centre for Educational Studies at the University of Tasmania will be valuable research which could influence the television material made available to your children and future children.

There has been little research in Australia or overseas that has focused on infant children's responses to the media and I believe that this research will provide infant teachers, curriculum planners and television producers throughout Australia with useful theoretical and practical information.

I do hope you will be able to find time to support this research study.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Edgar

(Dr) Patricia Edgar
Director

Appendix B.2.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

TELEVISION AND VIDEO

April 12, 1989

This questionnaire relates to **YOUR 4-8 YEAR OLD CHILD'S** television/video viewing habits. If you have more than one child in this age category, choose only one child, and base your responses on that child's behaviour.

The Questionnaire is divided into seven sections which are outlined as follows:

Part A:	general information about yourself and your child,
Part B:	your child's television and video viewing habits,
Part C:	your child's emotional arousal while using various types of media,
Part D:	your child's imitative use of media messages,
Part E:	your child's ability to interpret, judge and comprehend the content of media messages,
Part F:	your personal opinions regarding media's effects on children,
Part G:	your personal opinions regarding the perceived need for media education for infant children.

If you have any problems or queries relating to the questions, please call me (reverse charges) any evening on (002) 251003.

Thank you for your interest.

Kay Chung (Mrs)
Centre for Education, University of Tasmania

PART A: GENERAL FAMILY INFORMATION: (Circle the appropriate response)

1. Please indicate whether you are:

(a) male
(b) female

2. Please indicate the suburb or town in which you live:

.....

3. Please indicate whether you have a working television set.

(a) yes
(b) no

4. If NO, **please return the questionnaire** as soon as possible in the stamped self addressed envelope. Thank you.

5. Please indicate whether you have a working video cassette recorder:

(a) yes
(b) no

6. Please circle your child's age: 4 5 6 7 8 (For the remainder of the questionnaire please base your answers only on this child).

7. Child's sex: (please circle)

(a) male
(b) female

8. Child's position in family:

1234567/1234567 (other .....)

PART B: YOUR CHILD'S TELEVISION AND VIDEO VIEWING HABITS

9. (a). Please indicate with a tick the **usual times** (morning, afternoon and evening) that your child watches television on **weekdays** (Monday to Friday)

WEEKDAYS		(Tick)
MORNING:	6.00 a.m. to 6.30 a.m.	
	6.30 a.m. to 7.00 a.m.	
	7.00 a.m. to 7.30 a.m.	
	7.30 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.	
	8.00 a.m. to 8.30 a.m.	
	8.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m.	
AFTERNOON/EVENING:	3.00 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.	
	3.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.	
	4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.	
	4.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.	
	5.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.	
	5.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.	
	6.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.	
	6.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.	
	7.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.	
	7.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.	
	8.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.	
	8.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.	
	9.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.	
	9.30 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.	
	10.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.	
	10.30 p.m. to 11.00 p.m.	

9 (b). Please indicate with a tick the **usual times** (morning, afternoon and evening) that your child watches television on the **weekends** (Saturday/Sundays)

WEEKENDS		(Tick)
MORNING:	6.00 a.m. to 6.30 a.m.	
	6.30 a.m. to 7.00 a.m.	
	7.00 a.m. to 7.30 a.m.	
	7.30 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.	
	8.00 a.m. to 8.30 a.m.	
	8.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m.	
	9.00 a.m. to 9.30 a.m.	
	9.30 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.	
	10.00 a.m. to 10.30 a.m.	
	10.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m.	
	11.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.	
	11.30 a.m. to 12.00 noon	

AFTERNOON/EVENING:	12.00 p.m. to 12.30 p.m	
	12.30 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.	
	1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.	
	1.30 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.	
	2.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.	
	2.30 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.	
	3.00 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.	
	3.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.	
	4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.	
	4.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.	
	5.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.	
	5.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.	
	6.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.	
	6.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.	
	7.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.	
	7.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.	
	8.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.	
	8.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.	
	9.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.	
	9.30 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.	
	10.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.	
	10.30 p.m. to 11.00 p.m.	

10. Which television **channel** does your child usually watch?

(a) Tas TV
(b) ABC
(c) SBS
(d) equal mix of Tas TV and ABC
(e) other (please specify):.....

11. What are your child's three favourite television programs? (Please base your answer on your child's verbal responses).

(1) .....
(2) .....
(3) .....

12. Who is your child's **favourite** television character? (Please base your answer on your child's verbal responses).

.....

13. List the **LAST FIVE** videos that your child has watched.

(1) .....
(2) .....
(3) .....
(4) .....
(5) .....

14. How often does your child watch videos?

(a) not at all
(b) 1-2 a week
(c) 3-5 a week
(d) 5+ a week
(e) other.....

PART C: EMOTIONAL AROUSAL OF YOUR CHILD:

15. Has your child ever become **frightened, upset or distressed** (as indicated by your child reporting fear to you, crying, seeking comfort, or leaving the room) by contents of: (Circle one response for each media type)

(a)	...a television program	yes	no	don't' know
(b)	...a video	yes	no	don't know
(c)	...a storybook	yes	no	don't know
(d)	...a cassette tape	yes	no	don't know
(e)	...a movie at the cinema	yes	no	don't know
(f)	...a live dramatic production	yes	no	don't know

16. In relation to television, and video, please indicate the **intensity of fear** (on a scale of 1-4) experienced by your child for each of the following types of behaviour: (Please read the definitions of the fear terms before circling your responses to the following questions).

Fear terms defined:
1 **(no fear at all)** = the child would not usually be frightened, upset or distressed by such scenes;
2 **(mild fear)** = the child would appear to be frightened, may or may not report the fear to another person; would continue to watch the program without becoming upset;
3 **(moderate fear)** = the child would appear to be visibly frightened, would probably report the fear to another person; might not wish to continue viewing the program; might leave the room; might cry.
4 **(intense fear)** = the child would scream or cry in a distressed manner, seeking the support of another person (likely to be an adult), might vomit, and would be unable to continue watching the program.

(a) **Physical aggression/violence involving more than one person:** (death or serious injury) hand to hand fighting with or without a weapon resulting in visible injuries or death.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(b) **Physical aggression/violence involving one person**: (suicide or attempted suicide) with or without a weapon eg. tablets, guns, hanging, jumping from a high building, cliff or bridge resulting in visible injuries or death.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(c) **Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal:** provoked or non-provoked attack resulting in visible injury or death **to the person.**

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(d) **Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal:** provoked or non-provoked attack resulting in visible injury or death to the animal.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(e) **Impending danger of an accident** (plane, car, ship, bike etc)

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(f) **After effects of an accident** (plane, car, ship, bike etc) resulting in visible wreckage, injury and/or death.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(g) **Destruction of objects through remote aggression and violence (no physical human contact):** resulting in visible destruction of property through bombing, fire etc.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(h) **Destruction of objects through physical human aggression and violence:** resulting in visible destruction of property ie. breaking furniture, smashing crockery or glass.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(i) **Destruction of objects through natural causes (flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane):** resulting in visible destruction of property.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(j) **Directed verbal aggression:** such as shouting, arguing, screaming, abusing, cursing involving one or more persons.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(k) **Non-violent images: Appearance of character:** Including those characters who have human characteristics or are based on the image of human beings eg. witches, ghosts, goblins, etc.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(l) **Non-violent images: Appearance of character:** Including those characters who have animal or non-human characteristics, eg. E.T., Daleks on Dr. Who, Creatures in "The Never Ending Story" etc.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(m) **Non-violent images: Appearance of character:** Including creatures, persons or animals who have the ability to "transform" from one state to another eg. from person to animal; from object to person etc. ("Transformers", "The Red and the Blue", Incredible Hulk").

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

(n) **Non-violent images:** An event such as the abandonment of a child or animal.

1	2	3	4
no fear at all	mild fear	moderate fear	intense fear

17. In your opinion, does your child become more frightened if the story is a **news or current affairs bulletin,** rather than a dramatic episode of a series or movie?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) don't know

18. Has your child ever had bad dreams or nightmares that he/she reported as being related to:

(a)	television	yes/no/don't know
(b)	video	yes/no/don't know
(c)	storybooks	yes/no/don't know
(d)	cassette tapes	yes/no/don't know
(e)	movies at cinema	yes/no/don't know
(f)	live drama	yes/no/don't know

19. In your opinion, which type of television or video program does your child particularly enjoy watching: (circle the most appropriate answer)

(a) an extremely frightening program
(b) a very frightening program
(c) a not very frightening program
(d) a program that will not frighten him/her at all

PART D: YOUR CHILD'S IMITATIVE USE OF TELEVISION, VIDEO AND OTHER MEDIA:

20. Have you ever observed your child **discussing, imitating or using experiences from TELEVISION OR VIDEO** in his/her daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of your child's **behaviour** (eg. painting of Batman fighting; singing the "Vegemite ad.")

			Example of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (ad. jingles)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

21. Have you ever observed your child **discussing, imitating or using experiences from STORYBOOKS** in his/her daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of your child's **behaviour** (eg. "Cinderella" dancing; pretending to be Captain Pugwash fighting with a sword) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (theme songs)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

22. Have you ever observed your child **discussing, imitating or using experiences from CASSETTE TAPES WITH THE ACCOMPANYING STORYBOOK** in his/her daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of your child's **behaviour** (eg. singing the song from "Snow White"; pretending to be Peter Pan flying) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (theme songs)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

23. Have you ever observed your child **discussing, imitating or using experiences from MOVIES AT THE CINEMA** in his/her daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of your child's **behaviour** (eg. drawing of Bambi running from the hunters; pretending to be Pippi Longstocking scrubbing the floor) in the space provided.)

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (theme songs)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

24. Have you ever observed your child **discussing, imitating or using experiences from LIVE DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS** (eg. Peter Pan, Seven Little Australians) in his/her daily activities? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of your child's **behaviour** (eg. singing Captain Hook's song; telling the story of "The Secret Garden" to others) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (theme songs)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

PART E: YOUR CHILD'S ABILITY TO INTERPRET, (CLARIFY OR EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF) JUDGE AND MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT THE MEDIA PROCESSES AND/OR CONTENT.

25. Has your child ever asked you questions about **how or why** something happened in: (Please circle the appropriate response).

(a)	television	often/occasionally/never
(b)	storybooks	often/occasionally/never
(c)	videos	often/occasionally/never
(d)	cassette tapes	often/occasionally/never
(e)	movies at cinema	often/occasionally/never
(f)	live drama	often/occasionally/never

26. In regard to television and video: (Please circle the appropriate response).

(a) do **YOU** think that your child believes that cartoon characters (eg. 'people in "Paddington Bear" 'rats in "The Pied Piper") are real human beings and real rats..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(b) do **YOU** think that your child believes that "magical" effects (eg. Superman flying; animals in "Never Ending Story") can happen in real life ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(c) do **YOU** think that your child believes that actors or characters (eg. Nurse Loveday in "A Country Practice"; families in "Neighbours") continue to be those people or characters in their real life (when not on television) ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(d) do **you** think that your child believes that ugly creatures (eg.creatures in "Dr. Who"; Vincent the Beast in "Beauty and the Beast"; and "Frankenstein") actually exist in the real world ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(e) do **you** think that your child believes that actors fighting in television stories are just pretending ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(f) do **you** think that your child believes that people injured in television stories are just pretending ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(g) do **you** think that your child believes that people fighting in television news items and sport are just pretending ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(h) do **you** think that your child believes that people injured in television news items are just pretending ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(i) do **you** think that your child believes that live dramatic stories on television ("A Country Practice"; "G.P.") are true stories ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(j) do **you** think that your child believes that news stories are true stories ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(k) do **you** think that your child believes that normal human beings could participate in dangerous activities (eg. falling from buildings; car crashes etc normally performed by stuntmen) without being harmed ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(l) do **you** think that your child believes that actors and people on television stay inside the television set (or disappear) when you turn off the television ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(m) do **you** think that your child believes that "Sooty", "Sweep" and "Sue" (hand puppets) are real human beings ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(n) do **you** think that your child believes that "Fat Cat" is a real cat ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(o) do **you** think that your child believes that talking cartoon animals (eg. "Dot and the Koala") are real "talking" animals ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(p) do **you** think that your child believes that "Gumby" (an animated clay character) is a real person ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(q) do **you** think that your child believes that advertisements are designed to influence people to buy particular products ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

(r) do **you** think that your child believes that children on television (Cosby children in "The Cosby Show"; Chloe or other children in "A Country Practice") are happier than themselves ..... yes/no/sometimes/unsure

PART F: PERSONAL OPINIONS REGARDING MEDIA'S EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

27. Considering your child's personality, temperament, family background, tv/video viewing habits, etc, **do you feel that the viewing of violent television and video programs MIGHT (at some stage in his/her life) have any lasting negative (antisocial) effect on his/her behaviour.**

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) maybe
(d) don't know

28. Some television and video programs, such as police, western and horror stories, contain considerable violent action. Do you feel that the violence in these programs leads to an increase in the amount of violence that occurs in your community.

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) don't know

29. Do you personally believe that criminally-minded people might use information from a television program or video to plan or commit a crime?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) maybe
(d) don't know

PART G: PERSONAL OPINIONS REGARDING THE PERCEIVED NEED FOR MEDIA EDUCATION FOR INFANT CHILDREN:

30. Do you believe that **media education is necessary for young children? (4-8 year old)**

yes no

31. If **yes**, by whom should it be taught?

(a) school
(b) parents
(c) both school and parents
(d) other .....

32. If yes to question 30, **rate the following topics** according to what you believe are the priority areas for media education with infants. For example, if you believe that "media production" is the most important area to be taught to infants, place a 1 in the box provided. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to this question, I am concerned with your response in reference to your child's needs in this area. Rate 1-5 only.

[ ] advertising in the media
[ ] historical development of the media
[ ] fact and fantasy in the media
[ ] influence of the media
[ ] purpose of the media
[ ] evaluation of the media
[ ] media production techniques
[ ] comparison of the different media
[ ] other .....
[ ] other.....

33. **Why did you choose those areas as being important?** Please explain your reason and indicate the types of activities you might consider to be helpful to infant children.

1. .....
.....
.....

2. .....
.....

.....

3. .....
.....
.....

4. .....
.....
.....

5. .....
.....
.....

34. Do you believe that infant media education should:

(a) generally cover all mass media (eg. television, radio, newspaper, magazine, video)
(b) concentrate on television and video only
(c) television only
(d) other (please specify)

35. If you would like to add any other information about media education or children's experiences with the media, please feel free to include them in the space provided.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much for your participation.

PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO ME IN THE STAMPED SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

University of Tasmania

CENTENARY
1890-1990

Department of
Teacher Education
Telephone (002) 202510
(002) 202566
Facsimile (002) 202569

Sandy Bay Campus
Churchill Avenue
Sandy Bay Hobart
Correspondence
GPO Box 252C
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Australia
Telex AA 58150

11th July, 1989

Dear Parent,

At the end of Term 1 you may have been one of the few parents who were asked to complete a questionnaire relating to your child's televsion and video viewing habits. This was part of a research survey aimed at determining whether there is a need for media education activities for infant children in Tasmanian schools. The response to the teacher and parent questionnaire has been wonderful, with parents providing detailed responses of their child's television viewing habits. From these initial findings we have selected five schools in Southern Tasmania in which we would like to interview every infant child (4-8 year old). The purpose of the interview is to investigate the **child's** understanding of the media. As part of the interview, it is necessary to show each child a series of photographs taken from television or video OR show them a 5 minute video tape containing several 7-20 second excerpts taken from television and video programs. The photographs and video tape images are identical and depict fact and fantasy situations from the media eg. a hurricane on the news; Fat Cat dancing; fighting in a drama series; Batman flying; ET etc. The images are not intended to frighten the child in any way, they are merely used as a means of explaining each question relating to the child's understanding of television/video images.

The Principals of your child's school has given their permission for the research to be carried out, therefore I am writing to ask you to support this research by giving permission for your child to be interviewed by me over the next couple of weeks. The interview will last approximately 20 minutes and will take place in the child's classroom with the teacher present. **This research is considered to be important by educators, television producers and The Australian Children's Television Foundation.** You may if you wish, come to the school to view the videotape or photographs prior to your child's interview.

A final point, as a small gesture of my thanks, each child will receive a 'child's' movie poster or sticker from the Australian Children's Television Foundation, for their participation in the research.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Chung (Mrs)

Please complete the form below and return it to your child's class teacher **as soon as possible.**

I GIVE/REFUSE permission for my child .....(child's name) to participate in the Television/Video interview.

Signed:.....(Parent/Guardian)

Appendix B.3.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INFANT CHILDREN

TELEVISION AND VIDEO

May 3, 1989

Note: Some of these questions (contained in Part C and E) are to be used in conjunction with one or a series of photographs (or video excerpts). The appropriate photograph(s) or excerpt must be shown to the child at the beginning or end of each question, depending on the instructions given for each question.

THE QUESTIONS CONTAINED IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE FORM THE BASIS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH 4-8 YEAR OLD CHILDREN. THE RESEARCHER MUST WRITE IN THE CHILD'S RESPONSES ON A MASTER DATA SHEET.

PART A: GENERAL FAMILY INFORMATION: (Circle the appropriate response)

1. Child's name:.....Class or Grade: K P 1 2

2. Age: 4 5 6 7 8

3. Sex: Male/Female

4. School:.....Type of School: (State/Catholic/Private)

   Location of School: (Suburb/Town).....

5. Suburb or town in which the child lives:.....

6. Do you have a television set at home?

(a) yes
(b) no

IF NO, COMPLETE PARTS C AND D ONLY.

7. Do you have a video cassette recorder at home? Can you watch videos at your home?:

(a) yes
(b) no

PART B: CHILD'S TELEVISION AND VIDEO VIEWING HABITS

8. From the daily television guide (see example) ask the child: "I will read out which programs were on television yesterday, would you tell me which ones you watched?" Record the childs response by ticking in the appropriate column and also identify the name of the program on the appropriate line. The "weekday" programs are recorded in the first section, but in the case of Monday interviews, go to Question 9 and ask about the weekend programs instead.

WEEKDAYS		
Program name:(record)		(Tick)
MORNING:	6.00 a.m. to 6.30 a.m.	
	6.30 a.m. to 7.00 a.m.	
	7.00 a.m. to 7.30 a.m.	
	7.30 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.	
	8.00 a.m. to 8.30 a.m.	
	8.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m.	
AFTERNOON/EVENING:	3.00 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.	
	3.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.	
	4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.	
	4.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.	
	5.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.	
	5.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.	
	6.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.	
	6.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.	
	7.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.	
	7.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.	
	8.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.	
	8.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.	
	9.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.	
	9.30 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.	
	10.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.	
	10.30 p.m. to 11.00 p.m.	

9. Please indicate with a tick the **times and programs (name them)** (morning, afternoon and evening) that the child watched on television on the **weekends** (Saturday/Sundays). Choose either Saturday or Sunday.

WEEKENDS		
Program name: (Record)		(Tick)
MORNING:	6.00 a.m. to 6.30 a.m.	
	6.30 a.m. to 7.00 a.m.	
	7.00 a.m. to 7.30 a.m.	
	7.30 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.	
	8.00 a.m. to 8.30 a.m.	
	8.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m.	
	9.00 a.m. to 9.30 a.m.	
	9.30 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.	
	10.00 a.m. to 10.30 a.m.	
	10.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m.	
	11.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.	
	11.30 a.m. to 12.00 noon	

AFTERNOON/EVENING:	12.00 p.m. to 12.30 p.m	
	12.30 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.	
	1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.	
	1.30 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.	
	2.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.	
	2.30 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.	
	3.00 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.	
	3.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.	
	4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.	
	4.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.	
	5.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.	
	5.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.	
	6.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.	
	6.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.	
	7.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.	
	7.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.	
	8.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.	
	8.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.	
	9.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.	
	9.30 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.	
	10.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.	
	10.30 p.m. to 11.00 p.m.	

10. Which television **channel** do you usually watch?

(a) Tas TV
(b) ABC
(c) SBS
(d) equal mix of Tas TV and ABC
(e) other (please specify):.....

11. What are your three favourite television programs?

(1) .....
(2) .....
(3) .....

12. Who is your **favourite** television character?

.....

13. Can you remember some videos that you have seen recently? Tell me the names of them.
(1) .....
(2) .....
(3) .....
(4) .....
(5) .....

14. How often do you watch videos?

(a) not at all
(b) 1-2 a week
(c) 3-5 a week
(d) 5+ a week
(e) other.....

PART C: EMOTIONAL AROUSAL OF THE CHILD:

15. Have you ever become **frightened or upset** (for example have you ever been so frightened that you cried, went to mum, dad or a friend for a cuddle, or had to leave the room) by something you saw or heard in: (Circle one response for each media type)

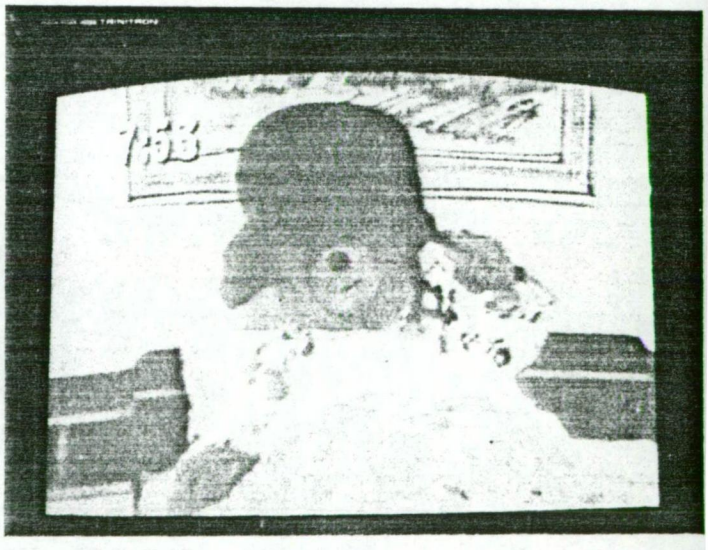
(a)	...a television program	yes	no	don't' know
(b)	...a video	yes	no	don't know
(c)	...a storybook	yes	no	don't know
(d)	...a cassette tape	yes	no	don't know
(e)	...a movie at the cinema	yes	no	don't know
(f)	...a live dramatic production	yes	no	don't know

16. In relation to television and video, what sort of thing makes you frightened? How frightened do you feel when you see things like:(please indicate the **intensity of fear** (on a scale of 1-4) experienced by the child for each of the following types of behaviour: (Please explain the fear terms to the child with each question).

Fear terms defined:
1 **(no fear at all)** = the child would not usually be frightened, upset or distressed by such scenes;
2 **(mild fear)** = the child would appear to be frightened, may or may not report the fear to another person; would continue to watch the program without becoming upset;
3 **(moderate fear)** = the child would appear to be visibly frightened, would probably report the fear to another person; might not wish to continue viewing the program; might leave the room; might cry.
4 **(intense fear)** = the child would scream or cry in a distressed manner, seeking the support of another person (likely to be an adult), might vomit, and would be unable to continue watching the program.

Introduction to questions:

Look at this photo. Do you know who is in the photo? (child's response) Yes that's right, it's Paddington Bear. If you saw Paddington on television, would he make you feel frightened? (child's response) No, of course not, he's funny isn't he? But some things on television might make you feel frightened. I will show you some photographs of different things that are on television, and I will ask you about how frightened they make you feel. Are you ready for the first photo?

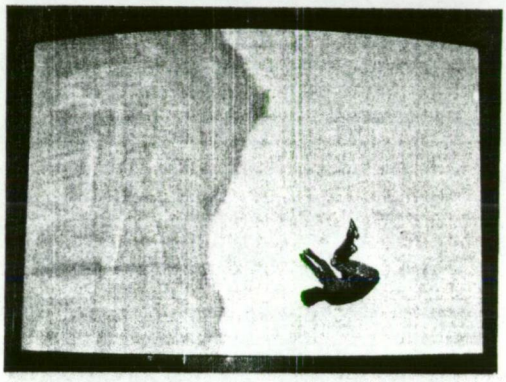


(a) Physical aggression/violence involving more than one person: (death or serious injury) hand to hand fighting with or without a weapon resulting in visible injuries or death.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of some people fighting on television. One of the men is stabbed with a knife and he dies. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** *frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

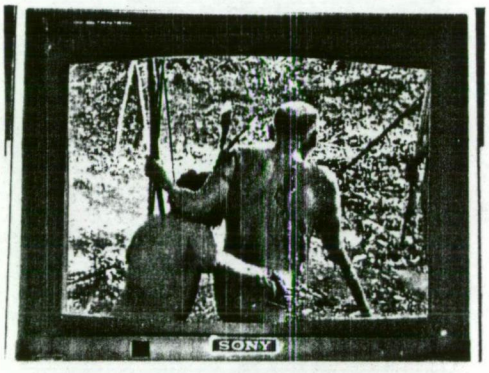
(b) Self-inflicted physical aggression/violence involving one person: (suicide or parasuicide) resulting in visible injuries or death.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of someone who has jumped off a cliff and they are going to fall to the ground and get hurt or they might even die. This was on television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** *frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*



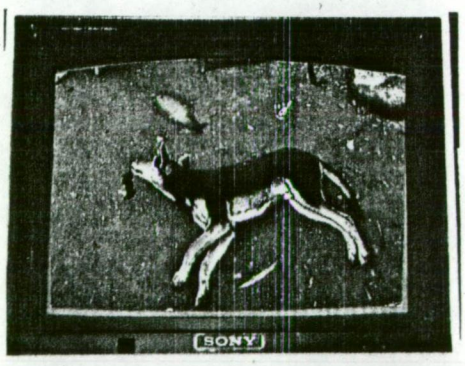
(c) Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal: provoked or non-provoked attack resulting in visible injury or death to the person.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of someone who has been hurt by an animal. The animal has run away and is not hurt, but the person is very sick and might die. This was on television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** *frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*



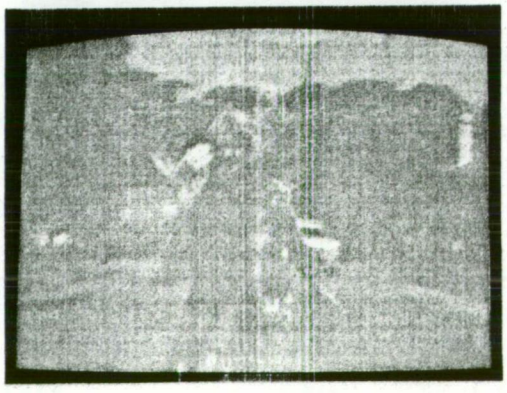
(d) Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal: provoked or non-provoked attack resulting in visible injury or death to the animal.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a little dog who has been hurt by a person. The dog was beaten with a stick and is starving and can hardly walk. The dog might die if someone does not help it. This was on television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** *frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*



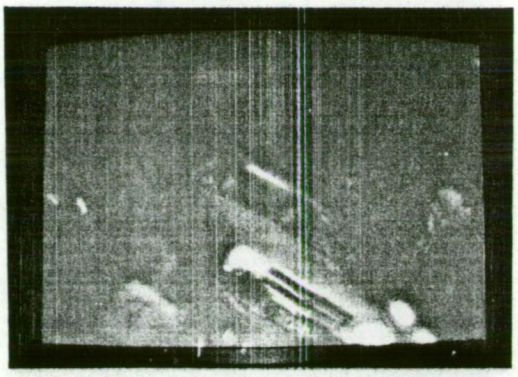
(e) Impending danger of an accident (plane, car, ship, bike).

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a lady who was crossing the road. Just as she got to the middle of the road a car came speeding around the corner and was just about to hit her when I took this photo of my television. If you saw this on television would you feel* ***not*** *frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*



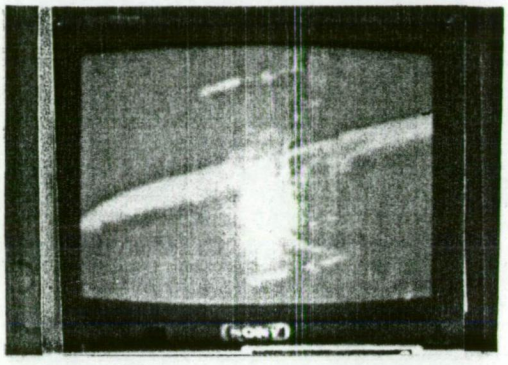
(f) After effects of an accident (plane, car, ship, bike) resulting in visible wreckage, injury and/or death.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a car that was speeding around a corner and it crashed over a bank. There was a lady driving the car and she had a little boy with her. The car was smashed up and the lady and little boy were injured, and might even die. This was in a story on television. If you saw this on television would you feel not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*



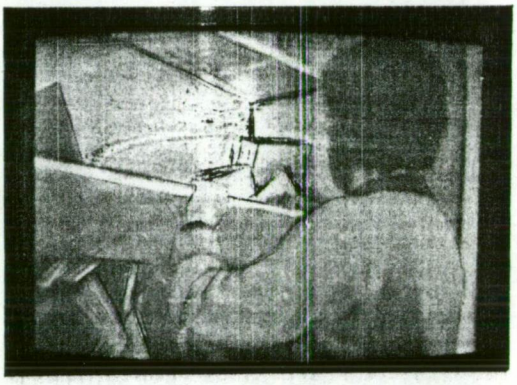
(g) Destruction of objects through remote (no physical human contact) aggression and violence: resulting in visible destruction of property through bombing, fire etc.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a plane that was taking people on a holiday. But someone who was very mean put a bomb on the plane and while the plane was flying in the sky the bomb went off and blew the plane to pieces. All of the people were killed. This was in a story on television. If you saw this on television would you feel not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*



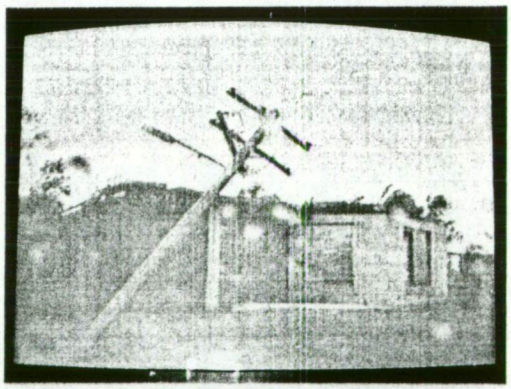
(h) Destruction of objects through physical human aggression and violence: resulting in visible destruction of property ie. breaking furniture, smashing crockery or glass.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a person on television who is very angry. He is smashing the furniture and all the things in the house. If you saw this on television would you feel not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*



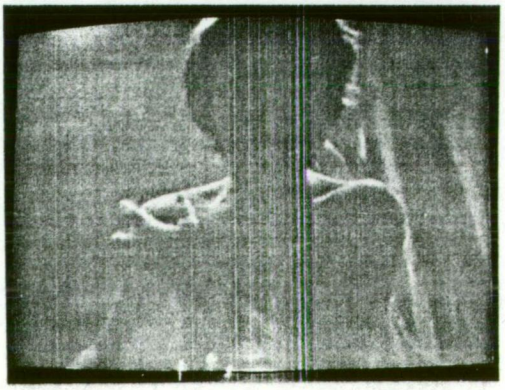
(i) Destruction of objects through natural causes (flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane): resulting in visible destruction of property.

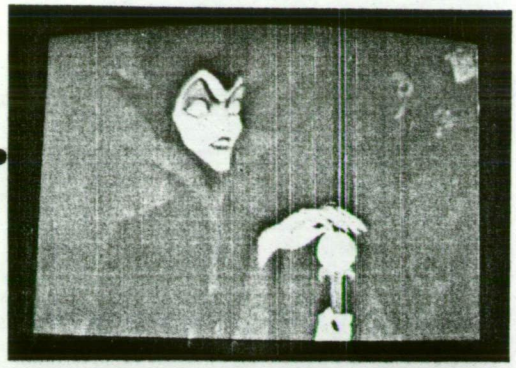
Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a house that was wrecked by a hurricane. The wind was so strong that it tore the roof off the house and the power pole is leaning over. This picture was on the television news. If you saw this on television would you feel not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

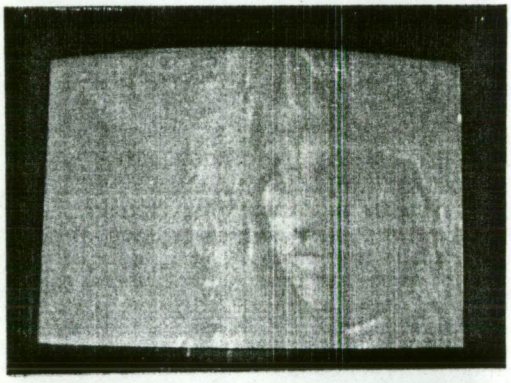


(j) Directed verbal aggression: such as shouting, argueing, screaming, abusing, cursing involving one or more persons.

Question: *Look at this photo closely. It is a photo of a boy who is frightened. He is yelling at another person who is trying to hurt him. He wants the person to go away and leave him alone. If you saw this on television would you feel not frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

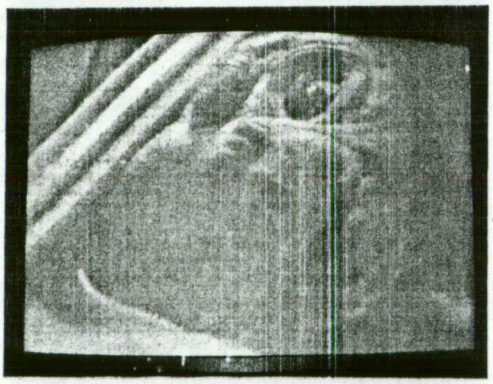


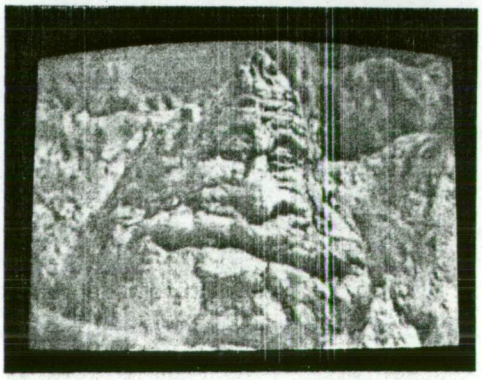




(k) Non-violent **images**: Appearance of character: Including those characters who have human characteristics or are based on the image of human beings, eg. witches, ghosts, goblins etc.

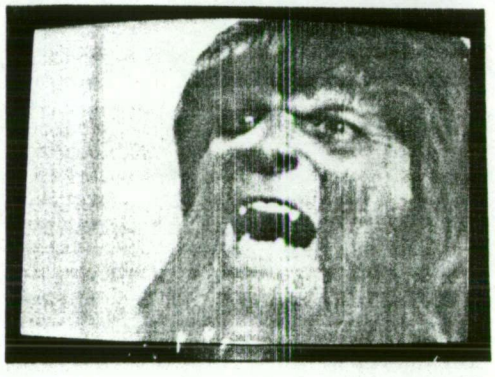
Question: *Look at these three photos closely. Do any of these characters from television frighten you? Which of these three people is the most frightening to you?* (After children respond by choosing one photograph, they are asked:) ***If you saw this person on television how would you feel - <u>not</u> frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a person like this on television make you feel?***





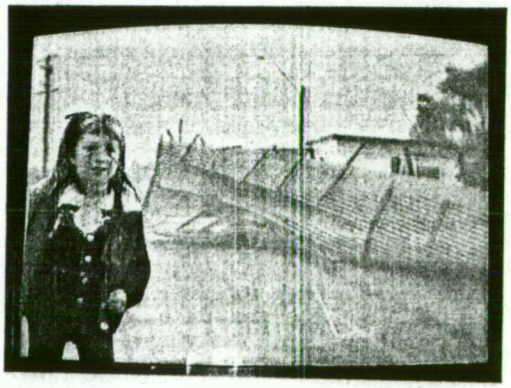
(l) Non-violent **images**: Appearance of character: Including those characters who have animal or non-human characteristics, eg. E.T., Daleks on **Dr. Who**, Rock Biter on **Never Ending Story**.

Question: *Look at these two photos closely. Do any of these characters from television frighten you? Which of these two characters is the most frightening to you?* (After children respond by choosing one photograph, they are asked:) ***If you saw this character on television how would you feel - <u>not</u> frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a person like this on television make you feel?***



(m) Non-violent **images**: Appearance of character: Including creatures, persons or animals who have the ability to "transform" from one state to another eg. from person to animal, from object to person (eg. **"Transformers", "Teen Wolf", "Incredible Hulk"**).

Question: *Look at these three photos closely. This man is looking into a mirror because he can see and feel that something strange is happening to him. Can you see that his teeth are growing longer in the first photo? In the next photo his face is moving about and he is looking frightened. And in the next photo you can see that he has changed into a wolf. If you saw this happening to a person on television how would you feel - **not** frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a person like this on television make you feel?*



(n) Non-violent **images**: An event such as the abandonment of a child or animal.

Question: *Look at the photo closely. This little girl has been left by her mother and she is very frightened to be on her own. If you saw this happening to someone on television how would you feel - **not** frightened at all; a little frightened but you would keep watching; quite a bit frightened and you might cry, or go to mum or leave the room; or would you be very, very frightened and you would cry or scream or might be sick and would not watch the rest of the program? How would a story like this on television make you feel?*

17. Are you more frightened if the story on television is a **news or current affairs bulletin,** rather than a story or a movie?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) don't know

18. Have you ever had bad dreams or nightmares after seeing or hearing something on:

(a)	television	yes/no/don't know
(b)	video	yes/no/don't know
(c)	storybooks	yes/no/don't know
(d)	cassette tapes	yes/no/don't know
(e)	movies at cinema	yes/no/don't know
(f)	live drama	yes/no/don't know

19. Which type of television or video program do you enjoy watching: (circle the most appropriate answer)
(a) an extremely frightening program
(b) a very frightening program
(c) a not very frightening program
(d) a program that will not frighten you at all

PART D: THE CHILD'S IMITATIVE USE OF TELEVISION, VIDEO AND OTHER MEDIA:

20. Have you ever **talked about or copied things from TELEVISION OR VIDEO** in your school work or play? Can you tell me about what you copied or talked about? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the child's **behaviour** (eg. painting of Batman fighting; singing the "Vegemite ad.").

			Example of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (ad. jingles)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

21. Have you ever **talked about or copied things out of STORYBOOKS** in your school work or play? Can you tell me about it? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the child's **behaviour** (eg. "Cinderella" dancing; pretending to be Captain Pugwash fighting with a sword) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (ad jingles)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

22. Have you ever **talked about or copied things from CASSETTE TAPES WITH THE ACCOMPANYING STORYBOOK** your school work or play? Can you tell me about it? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the child's **behaviour** (eg. singing the song from "Snow White"; pretending to be Peter Pan flying) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (ad jingles)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

23. Have you ever **talked about or copied things that you saw in MOVIES AT THE CINEMA** in your school work or play? Can you talk to me about it? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the child's **behaviour** (eg. drawing of Bambi running from the hunters; pretending to be Pippi Longstocking scrubbing the floor) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (ad jingles)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

24. Have you ever **talked about or copied things that you have seen in LIVE DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS** (give examples of: Peter Pan, Seven Little Australians) in your school work or play? Can you tell me about it? (Circle the appropriate response and give examples of the child's **behaviour** (eg. singing Captain Hook's song; telling the story of "The Secret Garden" to others) in the space provided.

			Examples of BEHAVIOUR:
(a)	drawing/paintings	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(b)	role playing (pretending to be others)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(c)	telling stories/ discussions	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(d)	playing (fighting)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....
(e)	singing (ad jingles)	never/sometimes/often	eg.....

PART E: THE CHILD'S ABILITY TO INTERPRET, (CLARIFY OR EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF) JUDGE AND MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT THE MEDIA PROCESSES AND/OR CONTENT.

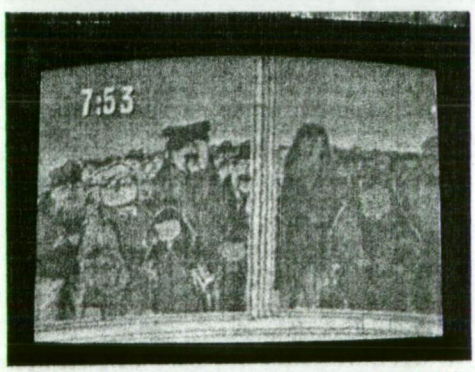
25. Have you ever asked your mother/father or teacher, questions about **how or why** something happened in: (Please circle the appropriate response).

(a)	television	often/occasionally/never
(b)	storybooks	often/occasionally/never
(c)	videos	often/occasionally/never
(d)	cassette tapes	often/occasionally/never
(e)	movies at cinema	often/occasionally/never
(f)	live drama	often/occasionally/never

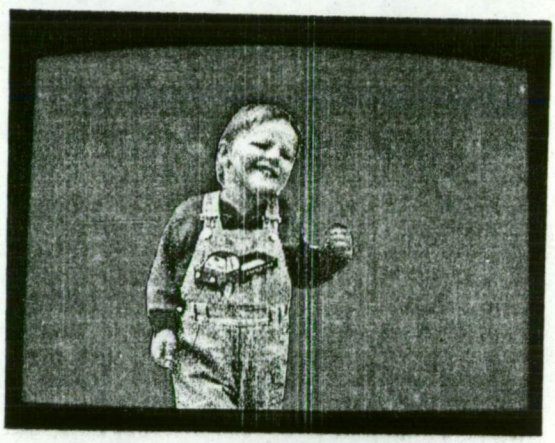
26. I will show you some photographs (or video excerpts) of things you might see on television or video. When I ask you a question about the photograph you tell me what you believe is true. (Please circle the appropriate response).

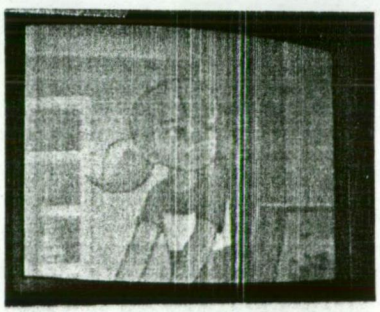
CIRCLE EXAMPLE SHOWN:
VIDEO/PHOTOS

Prior to the questions children were asked: *Do you know what* ***real*** *means? What does it mean when we say that something is real? Can you see some things that are real? Do you know what* ***pretend*** *means? What does pretend mean to you? Look at these two pictures on the card. One picture shows a girl and the other picture is of a boy. One of the pictures is a photo of a real person, and the other picture is of a pretend person. Can you point to the picture of the real person, or can you point to the picture of the pretend person. I'm going to show you some television pictures (or photos) of people and things that I saw on my television at home and I want you to see if you can tell me whether the people in the pictures are real or pretend people. Are you ready for the first picture?* (Children were then shown either the videotape extracts or the photographs. Regardless of the presentation used, children were asked the same question, with the word 'photograph' being replaced by the word 'video' or 'television' when video excerpts were used).



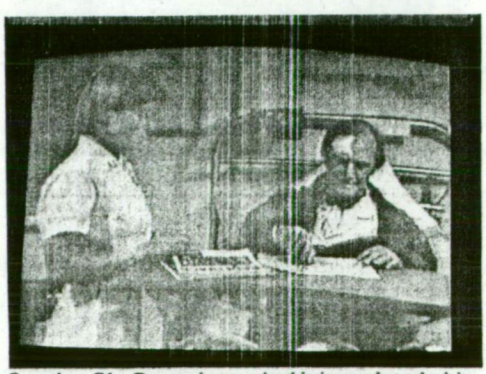
Question A1: These people in this photograph are looking in a shop window at Paddington Bear. Have you ever watched Paddington Bear on television? Are the people in the photograph (or on the tv screen) real people like you or me, or are they pretend people?





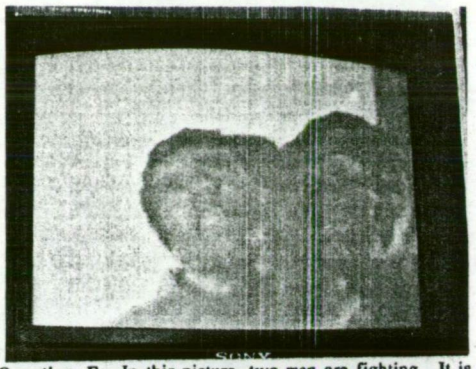
Question A2: Do you know who this is? That's right, it is a picture of Penny from the story about **Inspector Gadget.** Is Penny a real girl (like you, if the interviewee is a female; or like girls in your class if interviewee is a male), or is she a pretend girl?

Question B: Do you know who this is? That's right, it is Superman and he is flying in the sky. Do you think that people can really fly like Superman or is this just pretend for a television story? Could you or I fly like that do you think?



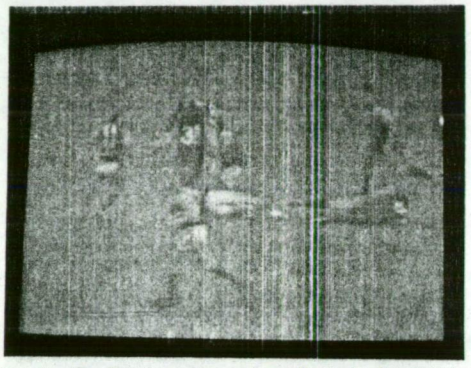
Question C1: Do you know who this is or what television program it is? That's right, it is Judy the nurse in A Country Practice. Have you seen this program before? Do you think that Judy is a real nurse and that when she is not on television she is a nurse at a real hospital? Or do you think that Judy pretends that she is a nurse in the story on television?

Question D: Do you know who this is? That's right, it is Vincent from **Beauty and the Beast.** Have you ever watched this program on television? Can you see that Vincent does not look like us? He has a lion's face, but he speaks like us. Do you think that creatures like Vincent live in the real world, and that we might see them one day in the street?

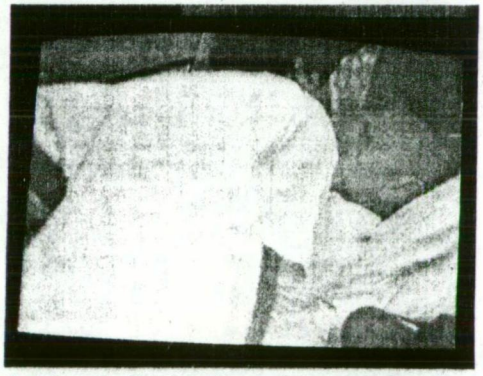


Question E: In this picture, two men are fighting. It is from a story on television - it is not on the news. Do you think that these people are really fighting, or do you think that they are pretending to fight? Do you think they might really hurt each other, and will have to go to a real hospital, or are they just pretending for the television story?

Question F: See the man in the hospital. He has a big bruise over his face near his eye. He was hurt in a story on television. It was not on the news. Do you think the man is really hurt, or do you think that he is pretending to be hurt?



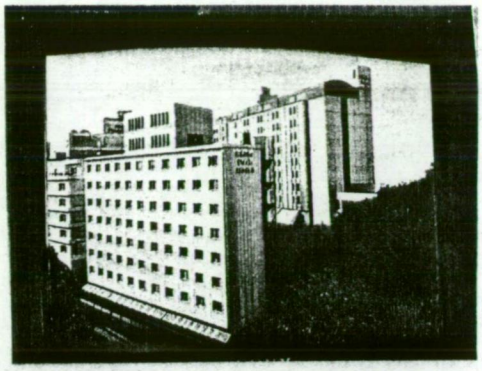
Question G: This is a picture of people playing football in Hobart. Two men have fallen down and are hurt. Other men are running toward them to try to help. The men had to be carried off the ground and could not play football any longer. Do you think that the men were really hurt or do you think that they were pretending to be hurt?



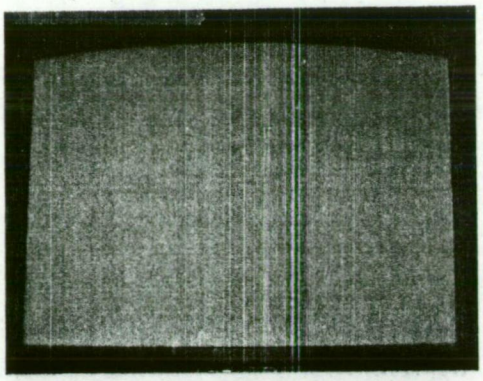
Question H: This is a picture of a man who had a heart attack. He is very ill and is being taken by helicopter to hospital. The doctor is leaning over him to see if he is still alive. This was on the news. Do you think this man is really sick or do you think that he is pretending?

Question I: Do you know what program this picture is from? Yes, that's right it is **A Country Practice.** Can you see the policeman talking to the schoolteacher? Do you think that **A Country Practice** is a true story? When things happen on **A Country Practice** - like a car accident - is it true like on the news?

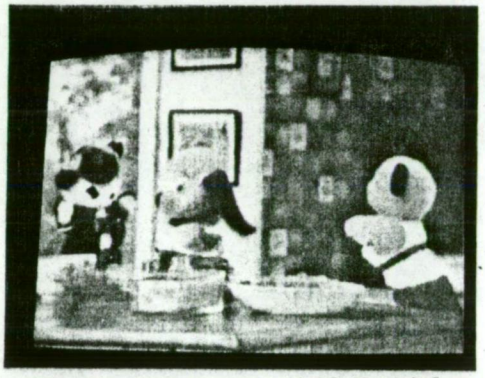
Question J: Here is the beginning of the news on television, and the newsreader. Does the newsreader tell us about true stories or are the stories pretend?



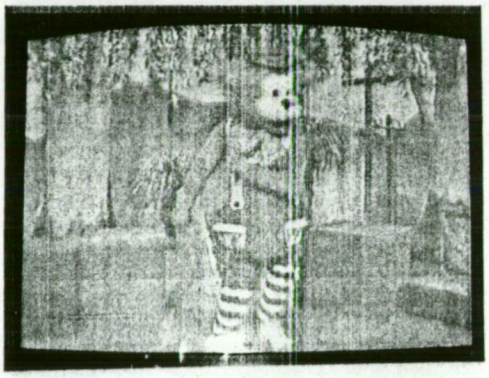
Question K: Sometimes we see people on television who smash up cars or jump from the top of a roof, and they never seem to get hurt. Do you think that we could do things like that without getting hurt too? If we jumped from a tall building, do you think we would get hurt?



Question L: (demonstration: turn television off to show blank screen) When the television is off we cannot see the people in the stories. But when television is on we can see people on the screen. Where do you think the people go who are on our television screens? Do you think that they are still inside the television? Do they live inside the television?

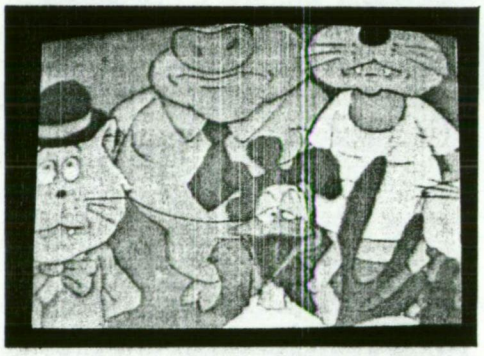


Question M: Do you know who this is? Yes, it is Sooty, Sweep and Sue. Are they real people like you and me?



Question N1: Who is this in the picture? Yes, it is Fat Cat. Is Fat Cat a real cat like you might have at home?

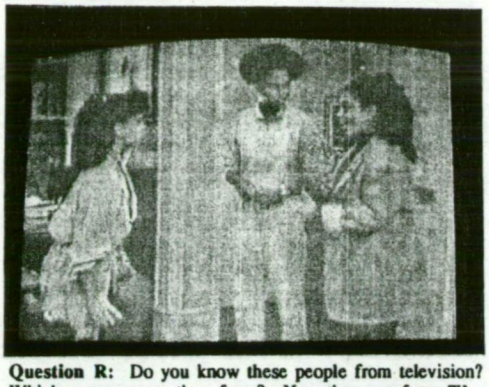
Question N2: Here is Big Bird. Is Big Bird a real bird and he can fly just like all the other real birds?



Question O: These animals on television are talking - just like you and me. Do you think that animals can really talk like us and that these are real talking animals?

Question P: Here is the King on Gumby. Is he a real person like us or like Prince Charles?

Question Q: Look at this picture. Have you ever seen this on television before? Do you know why they are eating Twisties on television? What do they have this advertisement on television for?



Question R: Do you know these people from television? Which program are they from? Yes, they are from **The Cosby Show.** Do you think that people in these programs are happier than you - or are you happier than these children?

PART F: PERSONAL OPINIONS REGARDING MEDIA'S EFFECTS

27. Some television and video programs, such as police, cowboy,and cartoon stories,show people fighting and hurting each other. When you watch programs like this does it make you feel like fighting or hurting other people?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) sometimes
(d) don't know

28. Do you like to see people fighting and hurting each other on television?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) sometimes
(d) don't know

29. Do you think that people fight a lot in the community where you live?

(a) yes
(b) no
(c) don't know

30. If you could be any person from television for a whole day, who would it be?

.....

Why?.....

31. If you had a magic television that could switch on to any program, would you choose a...

(a) funny program (eg..).....
(b) fighting program .....
(c) sad program .....
(d) scary program .....
(e) happy program .....

Thank you very much for helping me.

Appendix B. 4.

Questionnaire for children

Name: .....Video chosen:.....

1. Did you enjoy that program? YES/NO

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Did it make you frightened? YES/NO

3. If yes, which parts?

.....
.....
.....
.....

4. Can you describe how you feel when you are frightened?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. What do you do when you are frightened?

.....
.....
.....
.....

6. Did you like any of the characters? Which ones.

.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Would you like to be any of the characters? YES/NO

8. Why?

Appendix B.5.

Post-video Questionnaire for Parents of Case-Study Children

October, 1989

This questionnaire is designed to provide the researcher with information about your child's personality, television viewing habits and personal data.

Child's name:..... Age:.....

Position in family: .....

Hours spent viewing tv per night: .....(including videos)

During the observations, would you say that your child's viewing behaviour is typical of his regular viewing (ie. when researcher is not present)

YES/NO (Please comment)

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate your child in terms of fear arousal.

0	1	2	3	4	5
not afraid of anything					extremely frightened

3. Has your child ever been afraid of any of the following? (Tick)

- darkness
- strangers
- loud noises
- bright lights
- spiders
- dogs or other animals
- frightening faces on tv

- frightening stories in books
- going to school
- imaginary monsters/witches/ghosts
- death of self or family member
- injury of self or family member
- war or disaster
- being abandoned
- other.....
- other.....

4. Does your child ever have bad dreams or nightmares related to the above items? If yes, please indicate the topic of the dream.

.....
.....

5. Since the mass media course has been operating in your child's school, has your child discussed any of the contents with you? Please comment on areas if possible. (Use back of sheet if insufficient space)

.....
.....
.....
.....

6. In the past few weeks has there been any change in your child's television viewing habits eg. more critical of television content; reduced viewing; increased viewing; etc. Please comment and add possible reasons for the changes.

.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Do you honestly feel that the mass media activities have helped your child interpret, (clarify or explain the meaning of) judge and make decisions about the media processes and/or content? YES/NO (Please comment)

.....
.....
.....
.....

8. Do you honestly feel that the mass media activities have helped reduce your child's fear of frightening characters or events on television?

YES/NO (Please comment)

.....
.....
.....
.....

Appendix B. 6.

Evaluation of Mass Media Program

Dear parents,

During the past five weeks your child has participated in nine mass media activities which were aimed at increasing the infant child's awareness of the media's products and processes. As part of the evaluation process, you are invited to make comments regarding your child's experiences with the mass media during the past five weeks. If you are able to recall any comments your child has made about the mass media (television, radio, newspaper or magazines) I would be very pleased to hear from you.

If you have some experiences to share with me, please write them in the space below and return your comments to the class teacher as soon as possible.

Thank you very much for your support and help with the homework over the past few weeks. Your interest and involvement has been very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Chung (Mrs)

My child's name is:..... Age:.....School.....

Appendix B. 7.

Teachers Questionnaire

Evaluation of the Mass Media Activities

It would be very much appreciated if you would make some comments regarding the mass media program. Please be honest, as this feedback is a very important aspect of the research. If you have insufficient space, please write on the back or attach another sheet of paper. Thank you very much for your help.

1. Did you feel that the activities were appropriate for the age/stage of the children?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Did the activities interest the children?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Did you find the activities easy to teach?

.....
.....
.....
.....

4. Was there sufficient information provided?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. Do you feel that the children have benefited from the activities?

.....

.....
.....
.....

6. Do you feel that the homework activities were of any benefit?

.....
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.....
.....

7. Were the sessions long enough?

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.....
.....
.....

8. Were the video examples and materials (wigs, make-up, photos) appropriate?

.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Do you feel that this subject is of value to children in your class?

.....
.....
.....
.....

10. Any other comments: (from parents, children or self)

.....
.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX C:

Teacher's Notes and Activities

Mass Media Experience in Early Childhood

K. M. Chung
Centre for Education
University of Tasmania

September 1989

Teacher Notes

Mass Media experience in early childhood

This brief paper, based on a recent study of children and their mass media experiences, outlines the relationship of early childhood experiences with the mass media as an introduction to developmental 'needs-based' activities for four-to-eight year old children.

The planned activities form part of a trial syllabus, and therefore comments and suggestions are appreciated and welcomed.

INTRODUCTION:

Many of the negative effects attributed to television and video stem from the infant viewers lack of awareness or misunderstanding of messages because of: (a) the cognitive and emotional immaturity of the viewer; and (b) the media's ability to realistically and convincingly present fantasy as representations of reality.

The stages of infancy and early childhood are marked by the gradual development of physical and cognitive skills which are learned through *imitation, identification* and *experimentation.* The complex patterns of behaviour, language and cultural values are implanted and reinforced by parents, peers and others and are accepted and encouraged by society. During this critical stage of development, infant children are extremely vulnerable. They accept, absorb and develop the attitudes, beliefs, habits and values of significant others through an open and receptive mind. And it is because of children's seemingly limitless capacity and eagerness to learn, that we, as educators should be and are, concerned with 'censoring' childhood experiences.

The Mass Media and Early Childhood Development

Since the inception of television, there has been considerable debate about potential negative effects on children's behaviour. Infant children, like older children and adults, are fascinated by the mass media - particularly television. However, unlike older children and adults, infant children - with their developing language and thought - bring to their television world a lack of experience, skills and perceptions, that may lead to a misunderstanding of mass media contents.

The mass media, on most occasions present representations of reality and fantasy from an adult perspective, symbolized by abstract language and meanings that are not compatible with children's 'reasoning' or intellectual skills. In order to give some meaning to what is viewed, children 'centre' or concentrate on fragmented messages to which they can relate the real world and their real world experiences. For example, for the two year old child who has little or no

experience with pain or death, a violent murder on television, might gain no reaction at all. If the scene was accompanied by loud noises or gestures that were frightening to the child, then the child's fear reaction is likely to be as a result of the loud noises or gestures, rather than the act of murder. The seven-to-eight year old child on the other hand, through contact with the social world, begins to develop moral values and attitudes, as well as having gained some experience of fear (through stories, imagination and real world experiences) may be frightened by the same act of murder on television (a) because he has learned that that type of behaviour is unacceptable; (b) that 'hurting' is frightening; and/or (c) he may feel empathy for the victim. It should be stressed however, that because of individual differences in cognitive and emotional development, personality, environmental background etc, not all infant children will react in the same manner, at the same time, to the same stimuli.

Another important element that hinders the infant's understanding of the mass media is his widely held belief that: *seeing is believing*. To some children, witnessing violence on television - seeing the expressions of fear and pain on the actors faces, interwoven with realistic sound effects and dramatic music - is as real as a violent act in the real world.

Children's Fear Reactions to the Mass Media

Associated with the mass media's ability to realistically and convincingly present fantasy as representations of reality, is the media's potential to frighten the developing, imaginative and inquisitive mind of the infant. While it can be said that 'mild fear' is not harmful or threatening, there has been considerable concern, suggesting that the intense emotional reactions (screaming or crying in a distressed manner as a result of fear) may result in bad dreams, nightmares, and possibly more serious psychological damage (Ollendick, (1979); Garner, (1986); Lewis (1988) and Sonesson, (in the **Mercury**, 9 November, 1988).

A recent study by Chung (1989) found that in a sample of 292 Tasmanian four-to-eight year old children, 57% said they had become frightened, upset or distressed (as indicated by the child reporting fear to an adult, crying, seeking comfort, or leaving the room) by the contents of a television program. Events that were most frightening to 4-8 year old children (according to children) are the character's appearance - (including characters such as witches, ghosts, goblins etc); and characters who 'transform' from one state to another i.e. from a person to a werewolf. Physical violence between humans on television and video also frighten young children as well as impending danger of an accident or the after effects of an accident (car, plane, ship etc).

Fifty six percent of the sample of children revealed that they had experienced bad dreams or nightmares as a result of watching something frightening on television. Storybooks also frighten children, as indicated by 24% of the sample, although only 11% of the children experienced bad dreams as a result of reading or listening to a frightening storybook. The study found that all

areas of the mass media (television, video, storybooks, cassette tapes, cinema and live dramatic productions) had the potential to frighten infant children. This was confirmed by parental reports.

Table 1 below indicates the percentage of children (4-8 years) who reported that they had become frightened, upset or distressed by media contents.

Table 1: The percentage of children who responded that they had become frightened, upset or distressed by media content. (N=292)

Type of media	% of children reporting fear
Television	56.9
Video	47.9
Cinema	30.8
Storybook	23.7
Audio Cassette Tape	15.1
Live drama	7.7

The above Table indicates that infant children are more likely to be frightened by television, video or cinema than storybooks, audio cassettes or live dramatic performances. While it could be said that children's mass media time is dominated by television, and therefore has more opportunities to frighten, the same cannot be said of video or the cinema. Infant children, according to self and parental reports spend little time watching videos; and even less time at the cinema. Therefore, it might be presumed that it is the **nature**, as well as the **content** of the medium that has the potential to frighten an infant. "Screened" material transforms fantasy into a mirror of reality. With its live action, highly emotive - but basic - dialogue, and its undying interest in taboo subject matter, screened media demands an audience. In addition to presenting a fabricated glimpse at the so-called 'real' world, the screened images are presented in an equally mysterious manner. The concept of images transmitted to a screen, is difficult for children (and many adults) to understand when compared with live drama, audio cassette recording and book publishing, which are processes infant children participate in regularly in the classroom, albeit at a simplified level.

Mass Media Representations of Reality

In addition to providing infant children with complex messages via a complex process, the mass media conveys to its audience - print, sound and images that represent varying degrees of reality

and fantasy. Media presentations can be classified into stages or levels of 'Representations of Reality', within which sub-stages exist. These levels are:

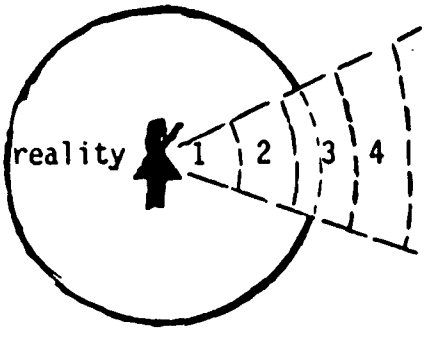
Level 1 Representations of Reality: These include news reports (in newspaper, magazine, radio and television) and documentary and current affair presentations because they endeavour to represent real world events and because they are presented to the audience as actual events that have occurred.

Level 2 Representations of Reality: These include dramatic stories on television, radio, magazines and storybooks that reflect 'similarities' to real life, using real people as actors, real places in the world and typical events that 'could' occur in real life.

Level 3 Representations of Reality: These include dramatic stories that depict real people in unreal settings with unreal creatures or life forms (such as in Dr. Who; The Never Ending Story; Caravan of Courage etc).They weave a patchwork of reality and fantasy.

Level 4 Representations of Reality: These include fictional characters and locations, as in "cartoon" or "animated" illustrations or stories (e.g. "Fireman Sam" and "101 Dalmatians"). Although having similarities in appearance to real life people and locations they often exaggerate aspects of the human anatomy, as in the case of the large nose on "Mr. Magoo" and the huge muscles of "Popeye". These fictional non-human type cartoon characters and locations are sometimes mixed with one or two human type animated characters, as in "Dot and the Kangaroo" and "Pete's Dragon". Also included in this level are fantasy characters and situations that could never occur in real life.

The illustration below indicates the relationship of infant children in their real world and their exposure to the mass media.



Representing fantasy

Infant children spend their mass media time immersed in Levels 3 and 4 - those areas furthest removed from the real world. Their storybooks, cassette tapes, videos, and television favourites delve into the magical and the unreal, far removed from his everyday experiences. The characters and situations are often evil and frightening, and the potential to frighten is great - regardless of whether children able to distinguish between fact and fantasy, although the children who cannot distinguish between fact and fantasy are more likely to believe that what they see and hear is true.

Discussing the vulnerability of infant children to the messages of television, Greenfield says that very young children equate all of television with reality, with the exception of cartoons.

> *As children get older they adopt new definitions of television reality: first they believe that anything on television that could happen in the real world is real on television; later they believe that what they see on television represents something that probably happens in the real world. ... Furthermore, if children either recognize characters on television as being like someone they know or identify with them, this greater personal involvement leads them to consider the program more real. Since children tend to identify with the fantastic characters on television (such as Superman) and to recognize the realistic ones, powerful factors operate to get the child to treat the televised world as real. This belief in the reality of the televised world makes children of all age groups vulnerable to the social messages of television.* (1984, p. 48-49)

The Mass Media and Children's Imitative Behaviour

For infant children, screened information, provides them with additional role models and experiences. During this period of immersion into mass media fantasy stories infant children are coming to terms with their real world. Besides developing physically, they are developing social relationships at school, learning about independence in the world, building a repertoire of emotional responses and acquiring a set of moral standards, values and attitudes - which will form the basis of their social and emotional development. At this critical stage of development, young children, so eager to learn, imitate people, animals, or anything at all. Almost everything they do is learned by imitation of others - whether it is singing a rhyme, playing a game, learning to skip or write their name. That makes television a potentially powerful educator.

In the study, Chung (1989) asked parents, teachers and infant children to report on children's (4-8 years) imitative use of the media. Results revealed that children imitate (draw, role play, discuss, group play, sing) all types of media, but are more likely to imitate television, video and storybooks than cassette tapes, live drama or cinema. Results indicated that children were more likely to imitate television and video characters than storybooks. Table 2 illustrates the comparison between children's imitative use of television/video and storybooks, as indicated by parents.

Table 2: Comparison of children's imitative use of television/video and storybooks as indicated by parental report in percentages.

	TV/VIDEO			STORYBOOKS		
	never	s'times	often	never	s'times	often
Draw	45	45	10	46	43	11
Role-play	18	63	19	35	59	6
Discuss	34	52	14	28	53	19
Gp.play	48	41	11	63	33	4
Sing	15	49	36	47	36	17

The Table indicates that although children were just as likely to draw storybook initiated pictures, when compared with television and video; they were more likely to use television and video as a source of imitation for individual role-playing, singing or television oriented playground games, than use storybooks as a source of imitation for those activities. These findings were also confirmed by teacher and child reports.

Even though many laboratory studies have investigated children's imitative or modelling behaviour in an attempt to prove or disprove the relationship between television aggression and real-life aggression, none so clearly illustrate the link as examples taken from the real world. Anecdotal evidence (Chung (1989); Tindall, Reid and Goodwin (1977); Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) and Phillips (1986)) suggest that children and adults may imitate the mass media, resulting in tragic consequences. Tindall, Reid and Goodwin (1977) give the example of a Sydney youth who hanged himself following a television demonstration of a hanging. Similarly they report a sex rampage in Sydney by a youth who was inspired by scenes in "Policewoman". Chung (1989) reports that two six year old boys fell to their death after jumping from a high-rise building in Hong Kong while dressed as "Superman". In Hobart, a parent reported that her daughter broke her leg after 'trying to fly from the garage roof' while imitating Mary Poppins.

Common sense tells us that if infant children are heavily involved with fantasy characters during this period of imitative and experimental learning, and at the same time having little knowledge of danger, injury or death, and have little awareness of media processes, then we have a potential for disaster.

In response to the perceived need for mass media awareness activities for infants (according to 91% of parents, and 86% of infant teachers who believed there was a need for media education for infants), the following activities are specifically designed on the basis of previous research findings to cater for infant children's fear about the mass media, their imitative use of the mass media and their general use of the mass media.

The activities are not designed to deprive infant children of the wonderful fantasy experiences that they have, but instead make them aware of the differences between representations of reality and fantasy, so that they are not excessively frightened by mass media contents, nor do they imitate the potentially dangerous activities often portrayed in the mass media.

Teacher Notes

Activity 1: Why we use the Mass Media

Objective: to identify the types and uses of mass media; to identify program preferences

What is required: video excerpt: "Fireman Sam"; VCR; examples of mass media information - ie. newspaper, magazine, radio)

NB: This is an introductory mass media activity designed to be used with the whole class.

1. Show examples of types of media - television; newspaper; magazine; and radio. Explain that another word to describe them is "media".

2. Ask: Why do we use each of these? Who uses each of these in your home? List some of the reasons why we use these forms of media.

3. Ask: How do we choose what to read, watch or listen to? Why is it important to 'select' programs?

4. Ask: What media did you use yesterday or today?

5. (See Note 7) Ask: What is your favourite television program? List favourite programs to find out the most popular programs. Why is that program a favourite? What channel is it on? What time is it on?

6. What other activities do the children participate in during their spare time?

7. Show the video tape: "Fireman Sam". (approximately 5 minutes) This is a popular cartoon program for the 4 to 8 year old age group and is used as a discussion starter for questions about program preferences. It could be shown either before or following question 5.

Home Activity:

1. My favourite television program is? (Draw and colour your favourite television program on the sheet provided)

Home Activity:

Name:..... Age:.....

My favourite television program is?

Draw and colour your favourite television program.

I like this program because: (ask Mum or Dad to help you with this part of the question)

.....

.....

Teacher Notes

Activity 2: Advertising in the Mass Media

Objective: to identify advertisements and examine their motives

What is required: Video taped examples of television advertisements; VCR; examples of newspaper and magazine advertisements.

NB: This is an introductory activity and is designed to be used with the whole class.

1. Show newspaper or magazine advertisements. Ask: Do you know what these are or why these are in the newspaper?

2. Show a video example of an 'ad'. Ask: What is the 'ad' trying to sell? Why are there ads on television? Have you ever watched ads on television? Have you ever "wanted" something that was advertised?

3. Is the ad interesting? Truthful? Colourful? What are the people like in the ads? Are they like your family? Does the ad tell you everything about the product?

4. What is your favourite ad? Can you remember it easily? Why can you remember it? Why do you think ads have songs or 'jingles'?

5. Activity: Design an 'ad' for "Cleaning your Teeth" or "Safety on your bike".

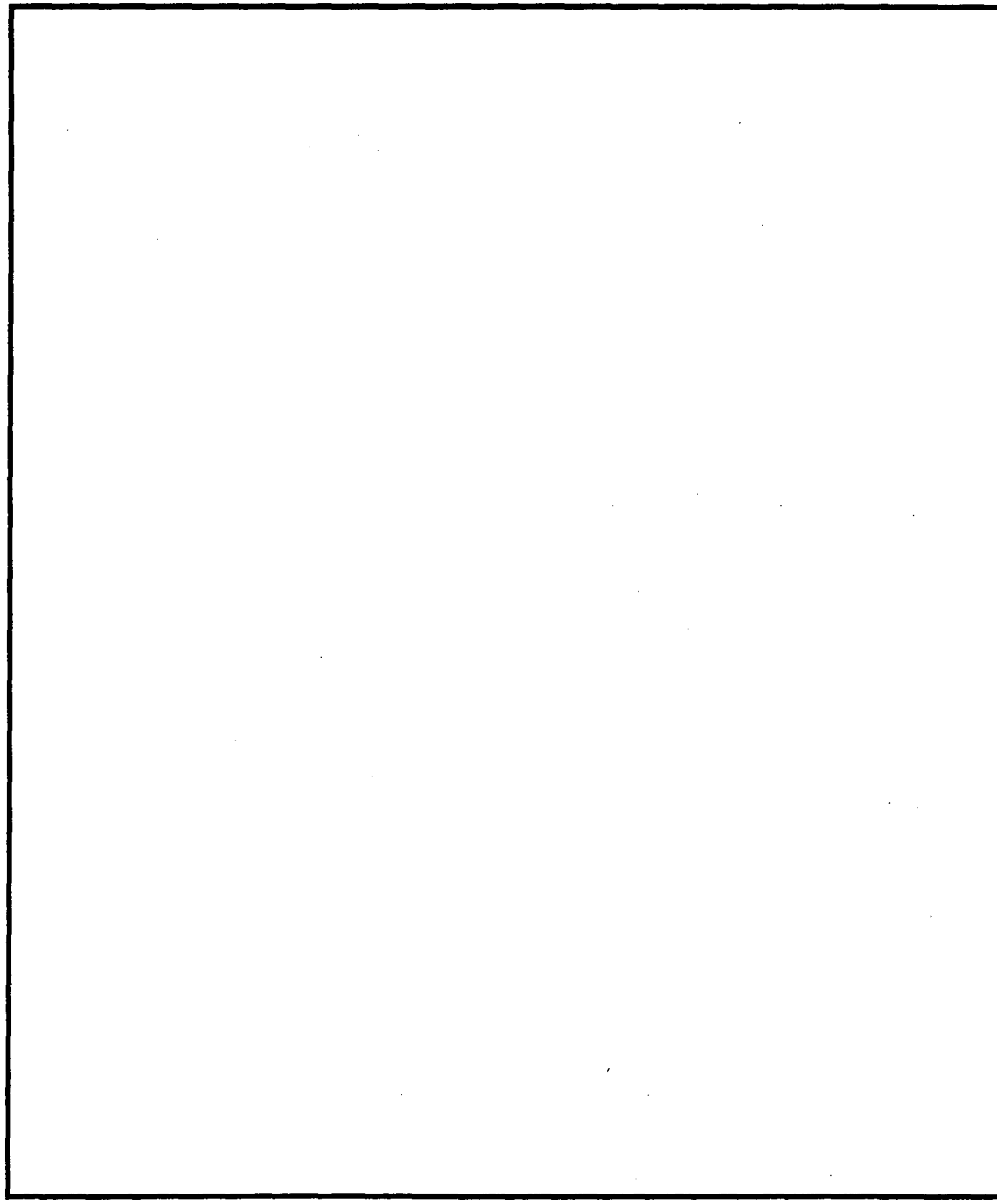
6. Discuss their ads. Would they make you clean your teeth or wear a helmet?

Home activity:

"Detective 'AD' Hunter" : Observing advertisements in the mass media.

Class activity:

An Advertisement



Tasmanian

Police

Detective:.....

School:.....

Age:.....

AD Hunting Branch of the Tasmanian Police

On television I saw these ads:-

In the newspaper I saw these ads:-

In the street I saw these ads:-

What are the ads selling? Which ad do you like best? Why?

Teacher Notes

Activity 3: Fantasy in the Mass Media: Cartoons

OBJECTIVE: that the children will be able to distinguish between live and animated characters in the mass media.

WHAT IS REQUIRED: Video camera and recorder, videotape, television, tripod, paper, crayons (paints, pencils or textas), flowers (leaves, pebbles, sticks etc), assortment of small toys, eg. lego, dolls, teddies, cars, etc., Bendable figurines eg. "Gumby" or plasticine.

All worksheets, photographs as indicated, and videotape material are included in this package. Use videotape segment "Mickey Mouse"

USING THESE ACTIVITIES: These activities are best used in the sequence presented. If there is insufficient time to conduct all of the activities, complete activity 1, then select portions of some of the other activities.

1. Begin a discussion about things that are 'real' (themselves, objects in classroom). Then look for things that are representations of reality. eg. pictures or photographs of things in books, poster pictures, pictures on television. Then discuss things that are not real (pretend). Show **photographs (A,B,C)** of things that represent the 'pretend' or fantasy world. Compare these to **photographs** of 'real' people **(D,E,F)**. Allow children to discuss the differences.

2. Shuffle the **photographs (A,B,C,D,E,F)** and present them to the children. Ask children to find the photographs of 'real' people or find the photographs of 'pretend' people.

3. Ask children to compare the **photographs (A,B,C)** of the 'pretend' people to a real person in the class or ask the children to compare the **photographs (D,E,F)** of the 'real' people to a real person in the class.

4. Look at other forms of cartoon characters: from the newspaper; comics; buble gum wrappers etc.

5. Show **VIDEO EXCERPT** "Mickey Mouse" (cel illustration).

After the video ask children about the characters. Are they 'real'? How do you know that they are real/not real? What are the characters made of? How do the characters walk and talk? Ask children to observe the character's mouth when it talks.

6. Make an animated (cartoon) video using one or several different types of animation. (Suitable for group activities)

IDEAS:

(a) "Mickey Mouse": (an example of a drawn cartoon) Using the drawings ask children to colour the picture in the correct colours, then video (see Notes on Animation for technique) the pictures in the correct sequence using the master sheet (the picture of "Mickey Mouse" marked MASTER as the 'guide' to line up each drawing prior to video taping.

(b) "Gumby" (an example of a clay animation). Using the plasticine and the "Gumby" character as a guide ask children to make characters for the "Gumby" video. Video the children's characters asking each child to move their character slightly between video taped intervals (see Notes on Animation for technique).

(c) Object animation (an example of 3-D object animation). Using any objects from outside (flowers, pebbles, sticks etc) or inside (toys or objects), video each object after the child moves it slightly between video taped intervals (see Notes on Animation for technique).

Preview the video animations and discuss them in relation to 'real' people (in the mass media and in real life).

Compare these to a film about real people acting. (Get children to film each other). How can you tell what is real and what is cartoon?

Home activity: Draw a cartoon character from television or the newspaper
Draw a real person from television or real life (Sheets provided)

Activity Sheet: Reality/Fantasy

Draw a 'cartoon' character from television

Activity Sheet: Reality/Fantasy

Draw a 'real' person from television

Teacher notes

Activity 4 : Violence and Aggression

Objective: to give the children an awareness of role-playing in relation to violence and aggresion on television, cinema, video and live dramatic productions.

What is required: video camera and recorder, videotape, television, tripod, make-up (including fake blood).

1. Begin a discussion about fighting. What is fighting? Why do people fight? What other solutions could we find to avoid fighting?

2. Ask the children about mass media characters who fight. Ask them to recall any storybooks, television programs, videos, newspaper or magazine, cartoons, news broadcasts that have showed or discussed violence. Talk about 'real' violence and aggression in the mass media (ie news reports) and the manufactured violence in the mass media (live drama, stories). What is the difference in the outcome of each? What happens to the person injured on the news? Does he/she go to hospital? Reactions of family and friends of the victim? What happens to the person injured in a video story? Does he/she really get hurt and go to hospital?

3. Show video excerpt of (a) animated violence and (2) live action violence.

4. Rewind live action video and replay in slow motion, stopping at various frames if necessary to emphasise that the person is not really getting hurt. Discuss 'stunt people' - who perform the violent scenes.

5. Using the make-up allow children the opportunity to give other children bruises, cuts etc.

6. Role play a scene with some children 'fighting' (adding make-up at the appropriate time) and videotape the scene so that children can see how it looks on the television screen.

EMPHASISE THAT THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION DRAMA DO NOT TOUCH THE OTHER PERSON.

7. Preview the 'fighting' scene at regular and slow motion.

8. End the discussion with rules about violence and aggression.

Home activity: Discussion with parents

Teacher Notes

Activity 5: Mass Media Fantasy: Cartoon violence

Objective: that children differentiate between cartoon (animated) violence and representations of real violence.

What is required: video cassette recorder, videotaped cartoon excerpts, television

Using this activity: Use this activity either before or after the activity on representations of real life violence

1. Begin a discussion about violence. Why are people violent on television? Are people violent in the real world?

2. Ask children whether they have viewed any violent cartoons on television or at the movies. How do they feel when they watch violent cartoons? Does it make them want to be violent? Is it real? Do the characters really get hurt? Is it ok to be violent if its a cartoon?

3. Show the video excerpts depicting cartoon characters who are violent. How can all of those things happen to the character and he never seems to get hurt?

4. Replay the video tape at single frame speed, emphasising that each image is a photograph of a picture (like the animated film they made earlier). Ask them to look for differences between the photographs. Discuss the images in terms of drawings.

5. Ask children to list all of the cartoons that they can think of that are violent, and all of the cartoons that they can think of that are non-violent. Discuss their likes and dislikes of each category.

6. Discuss the morality of violence and any rules about violence that you may have at your school.

Teacher Notes

Activity 6 : Fantasy - frightening characters

Objective: to create frightening characters and give children an awareness of how the mass media creates frightening characters; to identify individual fears and strategies for coping with fears.

What is required: Video camera, recorder, videotape, television, tripod, old clothing,wigs, make-up, torch or candle, taped music or instruments for children to create music, old fur fabric and facial gum.

1. Show some photographs of 'frightening faces' (see photographs)

2. Get children to rate the photographs in terms of the most frightening to the least frightening character. Discuss differences in children's answers emphasising that different people are frightened by different things.

3. How are these characters created? Ask for children's responses.

4. Why are these characters created? To frighten? To entertain? Different age of audience?

5. Are these characters real? Cartoon? Actors?

6. Using make-up, masks, old clothes, wigs etc, allow children to dress up and create frightening characters.

7. Video tape children as frightening characters in different situations. In bright sunlight, in dark corners with maybe a candle or torch for light, spooky music background etc.

8. Preview the video tape and discuss in terms of characters in the mass media.

9. Animated characters: Discuss in terms of drawings - see other activity regarding animated characters.

10. Video tape a person changing into a werewolf. This is achieved by stop motion photography (like animation) adding fur and make up after each new segment of film.

Ways of coping with fears:

11. Ask children what they do when they are frightened. Some typical answers might be: cuddle a toy, cry, leave the frightening stimuli, cuddle another person, eat something. Discuss their answers and remind children that they can always:

(a) TURN TELEVISION OFF and do something pleasant;

(b) ASK AN ADULT TO COME AND SIT WITH THEM if they really want to watch the story;
(c) AVOID WATCHING PROGRAMS THAT ARE UNSUITABLE for their age range. Ask your parents if you could do something else instead.

Home activity: Discussion with parents

Teacher Notes

Activity 7: Special Effects - Transformation of Characters

Objective: that the children will be able to understand and experience the creation of television and film special effects, in particular the transformation of characters.

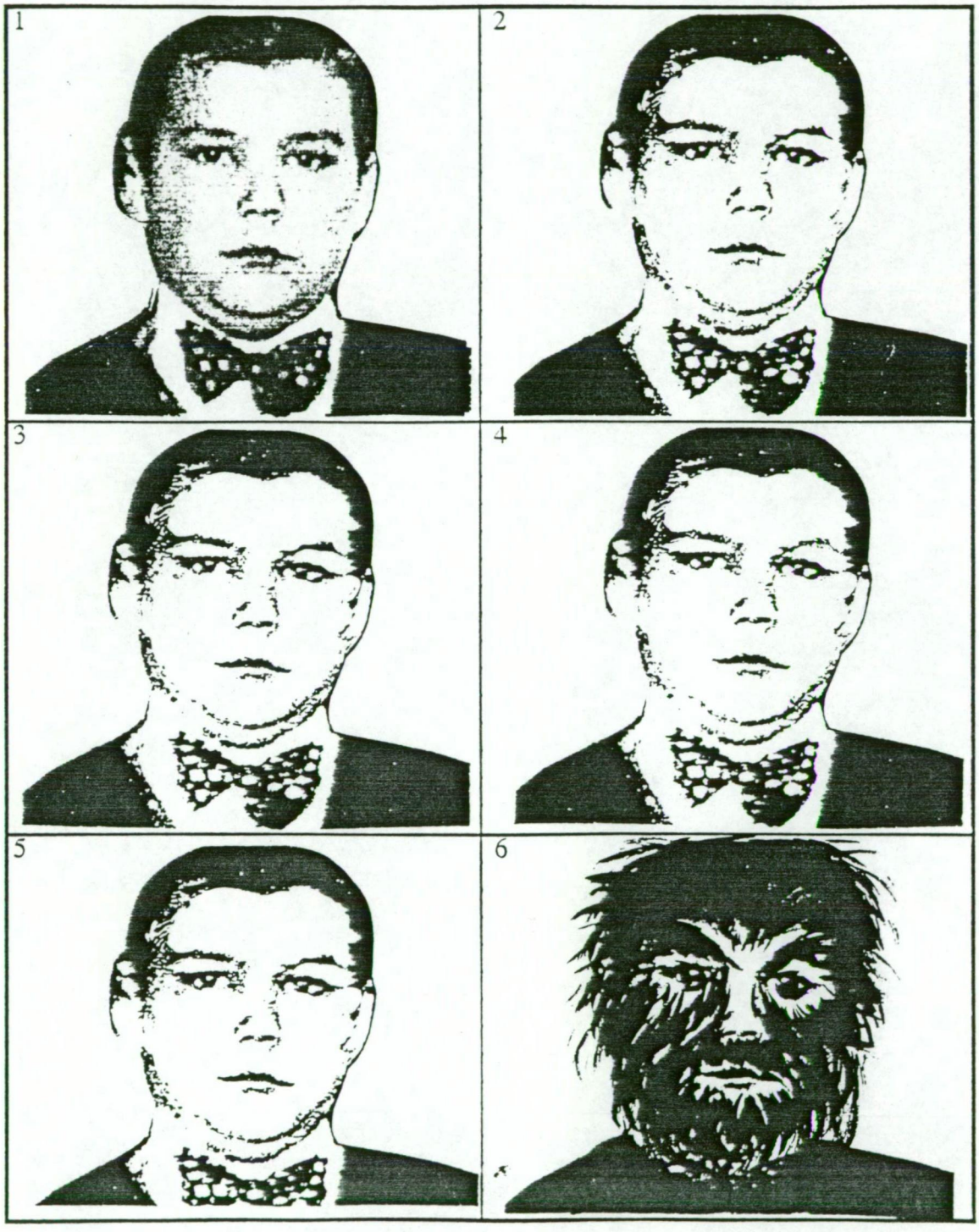
What is required: video camera and recorder, videotape, television, tripod, fur (rabbit or fur material - only the fluffy portion will be needed), false fingernails and adhesive gum.

1. Using a video camera film a few seconds of a child, just before he changes into a werewolf. Ask the child to slowly moan in agony, grasp for a chair or tree in front of him then sink to the floor moaning. Keep the hand on the chair or somewhere visible so that it can be seen by the camera. Stop the camera. Before removing the hand, trace around it to retain that position throughout the filming. Now the child can move and have some glue and fur attached to the hand. Not too much at first. Replace the hand in the marked location, and film a couple of seconds again. Continue adding fur, and filming after each addition until you have created a good effect. Leave the camera in the same potion, while you now add all the face make-up and fur. When this is complete, get the child to move back into the original position, with the hand on the tree or chair, so that his face and body is still hidden. Film at normal speed as the child emerges as a growling werewolf.

2. Using this 'stop-motion' photography technique any type of transformation can take place. Turn chairs into children or children in to objects.

Frightening characters on television and films

Complete these pictures to turn the man into a werewolf. Can you remember how we made someone turn into a werewolf at school?



If something on television frightens you,

1. TURN TELEVISION OFF and do something pleasant;

2. ASK AN ADULT TO COME AND SIT WITH YOU if you really want to watch the story;
3. WATCH PROGRAMS THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN.

Teacher Notes

Activity 8: Live action drama - Pretend stories

Objectives: to identify fantasy stories in the mass media

What is required: Video camera and recorder, videotape, television, tripod, activity sheets (as attached), Videotape examples (as included), storybook

1. Begin with a discussion of events that occurred in the children's lives prior to the commencement of school that day. This can be done by general discussion, or in pictorial form on the activity sheet provided.

2. Discuss how these events are sequenced, having a purpose, and are real and important events. Discuss the difference between our real behaviour and that described in storybooks. Read the excerpt from a storybook (attached) Discuss how the writer explains what happened when the children got up. OR show the video example of what happens on television when we see a family in the morning. Why does the storybook and the television program leave out so much information?

3. In drama, (tv, cinema and live drama) people 'role-play' or 'pretend' to be other people. Lets 'pretend' that we are other people. Role play some of the following characters:

(a) hairdresser and client
(b) mother/father and child
(c) doctor/nurse with patient
(d) builder

Discuss how we can change from one character to another - just like television, the cinema or live drama.

4. Read a short well-known storybook then videotape the children role-playing the story. Preview and discuss in terms of whether the story was true or pretend? How do you know?

Teacher Notes

Activity 9: Live Action - True stories

Objective: to identify factual information presented by the mass media

What is required: video camera and recorder, videotape, television, tripod, paper, pencils, photographs of children, tape recorder, blank cassette tape.

1. Show some 'factual' books, newspaper items and articles in magazines. How do we know it is true? Compare a true story about something in the newspaper (see example) with a pretend story about the same subject matter.

2. Is the "news" true? Where does the news come from? Why do we want to know about the news? Why do editors edit the news?

3. Give children roles as news reporters and ask them to gather information for a news broadcast. Explain that their news items must be 'true' stories.

4. Ask children to read out their news individually OR (for older students) choose one newsreader to read out selected pieces of news that has been gathered by the children. One person can read the weather at the end, and some children could be interviewed on the news program, or filmed outside at a sport event etc. Video tape the news broadcast. Replay and discuss in terms of a real news broadcast.

5. Ask children to gather news reports and 'publish' a "news bulletin". Distribute the newspaper throughout the class or school. Use real photographs to add interest and if possible type out the newspaper on a word processor.

6. Tape record children's 'news' broadcast and replay for "radio news".

Children's Activity Sheet:

This morning I:

The technique of animation

"Animation is a method of producing the illusion of movement from a successive presentation of still images. In that sense cinematography itself relies on animation. In a more restricted sense animation is taken to cover the creation of movement of inanimate objects such as drawings, models, puppets etc." (Focal Encyclopaedia of Photography, p. 46)

Children are already familiar with the animation process. In their imaginative play with their toys they animate a doll walking by making it take one step at a time, they 'drive' their cars along pretend roads, and make characters come alive through animation. The technique of animation in films is very similar. When you see a character move on the television, what you actually see is 18 or 24 separate still pictures every second. Each picture shows the character in a slightly different position than the previous picture. It is when the 18 or 24 pictures are flashed on the screen at a fast speed, that they actually appear to give movement to the image. In simplified terms, animation is many separate still pictures taken with a cine or video camera.

When using a video camera, focus sharply on the subject to be animated (the camera should be firmly attached to a tripod to keep it steady at all times) press the record button and record for only a brief moment (a count of two), then 'pause' the camera, while you move the subject slightly (or add a new illustration if using drawn pictures). By pressing 'pause' again you record your changed image for another couple of seconds, then pause, move the subject slightly again. Continue in this manner until the scene is completed.

Points to remember:

Make sure you are video taping in a room with plenty of light.
Video with your back to a window (filming into bright sunlight will 'wash out' your picture.)

Glossary of Terms

animated cartoon: "a film produced by photography, a series of gradually changing drawings, etc; which give the illusion of movement when the series is projected rapidly. (Collins English Dictionary).

cartoon: "a sequence of drawings in a newspaper magazine etc. relating a comic or adventurous situation"

fantasy: a definition of fantasy as portrayed in the mass media is the representation by individuals (in character roles); animated characters; puppets etc depicting or emphasising actual human life or events or "impossible" events of any kind.

fear: "an emotion of violent agitation or fright in the presence (actual or anticipated) of danger or pain. It is marked by extensive organic changes and behaviours of flight or concealment" (English and English, p. 204)

"fear is, in a generic sense, a differential emotional experience that etokens cognitive awareness of threat to some highly ego-involved aspect of the individual's self-concept such as physical well being or self esteem." Ausubel, Sullivan, Ives p. 282.

mass media: the communication technology or hardware (collectively) that are utilised simultaneously by large numbers of the population.

media: Media refers to the communication technology (hardware) that delivers he means of communication, ie. print, sound, pictures - in their institutionalised form these are press, radio and television.

Mass is applied to these media because of the huge numbers involved in these communication processes.

pretend: "to make believe, as in play"

real: "existing or occuring in the physical world; not imaginary, fictitious, or theoretical; actual; true, not false".

representation of reality: a definition of reality or real life as portrayed in the mass media is the representation by individuals (in or out of character roles) depicting or emphasising actual human life or events as they appear to occur in the physical world.

violence: foreceful action, physical or emotional, usually effecting or intending to effect injury, physical or psychological harm or death; the destruction of persons or self, animals or objects, through human and/or animal hostile encounters or natural disasters.

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Video excerpts:

1. **"Fireman Sam" - animation**
2. **Television advertisements**
3. **"Mickey's Birthday Party" - animation**
4. **Live action fighting on television**
5. **Cartoon violence on television**
6. **Frightening characters - faces**
7. **Frightening characters - transformations**
8. **Live drama - pretend stories**
9. **Live stories - the news**

APPENDIX C: Animated character - photograph 1.

APPENDIX C: Animated character - photograph 2.

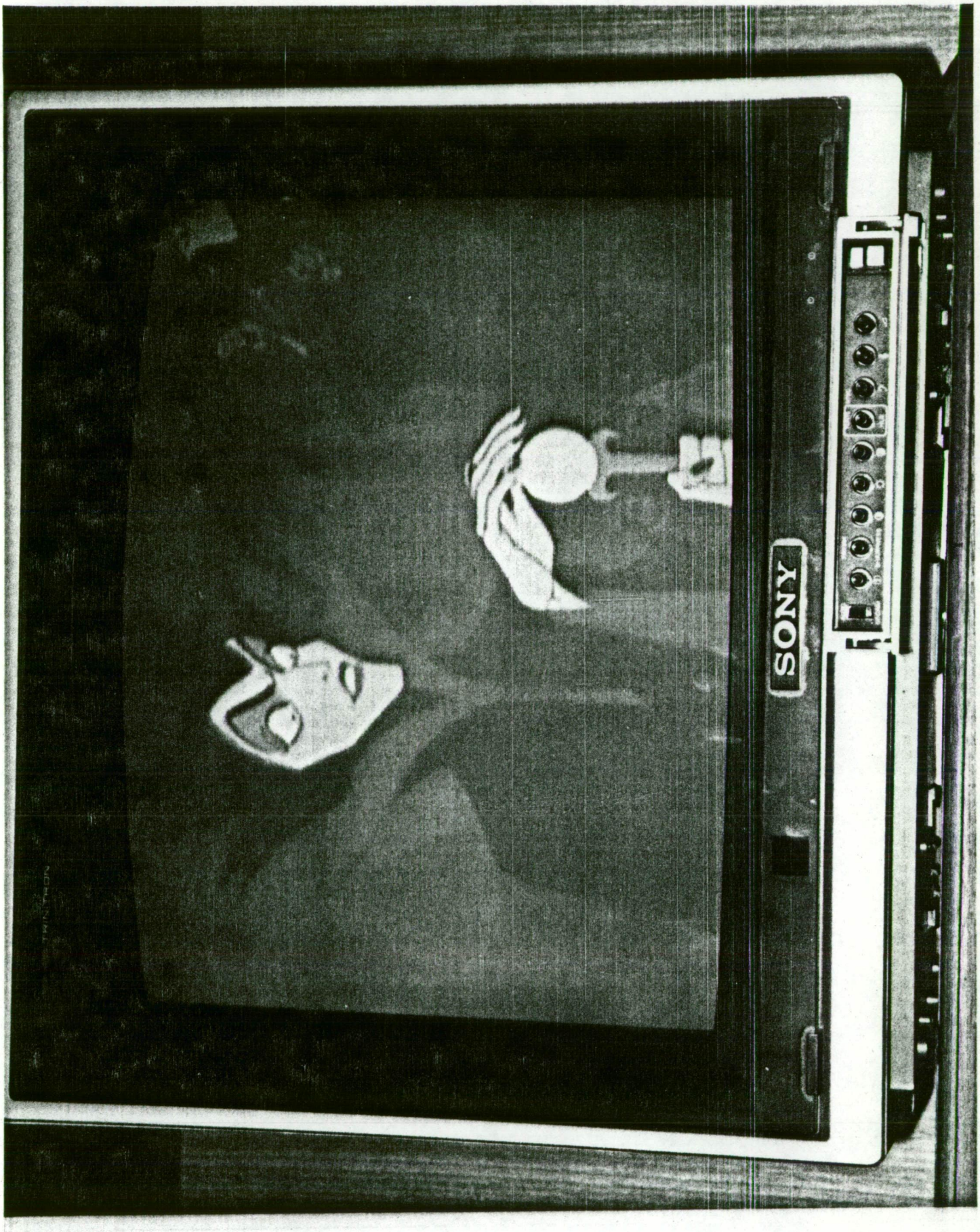
APPENDIX C: Animated character - photograph 3.

APPENDIX C: Real-life character - photograph 4.

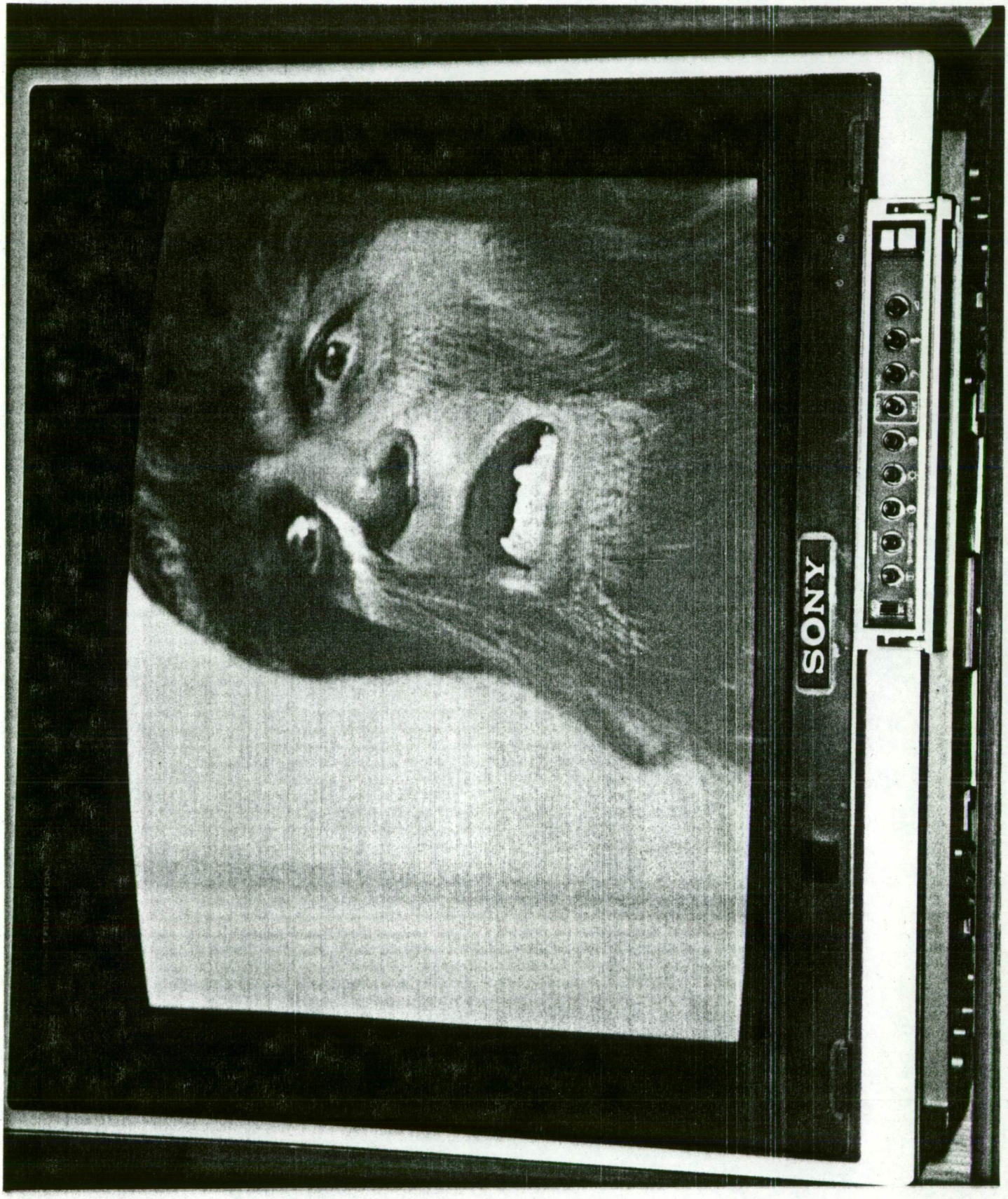
APPENDIX C: Real-life character - photograph 5.

APPENDIX C: Real-life character - photograph 6
Frightening character

APPENDIX C: Frightening character - photograph 7.



APPENDIX C: Frightening character - photograph 8.



APPENDIX C: Frightening character - photograph 9.

Appendix D

Fear intensity experienced by children in relation to specific images/scenes:

TABLE: A1. Physical aggression/violence involving more than one person.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parents	n=
1	44.8	130	28.4	29
2	40.7	118	45.1	46
3	14.5	42	23.5	24
4			3.0	3

A2. Physical aggression/violence involving one person.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parents	n=
1	59.3	172	24.2	22
2	32.8	95	46.1	42
3	7.9	23	24.2	22
4			5.5	5

A3. Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal: A

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	99.7	291	12	12
2			44	44
3	.3	1	39	39
4			5	5

A4. Physical aggression/violence involving a person and an animal:B

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	99.7	291	10.8	11
2			38.2	39
3	.3	1	43.1	44
4			7.9	8

A5. Impending danger of an accident.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	54.6	159	24.1	27
2	35.1	102	52.7	59
3	10.3	30	20.5	23
4			2.7	3

A6. After effects of an accident.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	56.2	164	24.1	27
2	37.0	108	49.1	55
3	6.8	20	24.1	27
4			2.7	3

A7. Destruction of objects through remote aggression and violence.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	58.1	168	41.4	46
2	37.4	108	39.6	44
3	4.5	13	18.0	20
4			1.0	1

A8. Destruction of objects through physical human aggression and violence.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	77.2	223	33.9	36
2	21.1	61	50.9	54
3	1.7	5	14.1	15
4			1.0	1

A9. Destruction of objects through natural causes (flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane).

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	78.8	205	39.5	45
2	20.4	61	50.0	57
3	.8	2	10.5	12
4			0	0

A10. Directed verbal aggression.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	76.6	223	35.5	39
2	21.3	62	45.5	50
3	2.1	6	16.3	18
4			2.7	3

A11. Non-violent images: Appearance of character - human type.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	31.2	91	30.2	35
2	48.9	143	37.1	43
3	19.9	58	32.7	38
4			0	0

A12. Non-violent images: Appearance of character - non-human type.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	70.5	206	45.8	54
2	24.3	87	31.4	37
3	5.2	15	22.0	26
4			.8	1

A13. Non-violent images: Appearance of character - transformations.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	55.5	162	75	84
2	29.8	87	19.6	22
3	14.7	43	5.4	6
4			0	0

A14. Non-violent images: Abandonment of a child.

LEVEL OF FEAR	% Children	n=	% Parent	n=
1	95.2	278	28.7	33
2	4.5	13	46.1	53
3	.3	1	23.5	27
4			1.7	2

TABLE A15: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (a) whether the child or children in question believe that cartoon characters e.g. people in Paddington Bear or rats in The Pied Piper are real human beings and real rats?

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	5.0	(6)	70.8	(85)	16.7	(20)	7.5	(9)	120
Teacher	8.7	(11)	45.2	(57)	32.5	(41)	13.5	(17)	125
Child	5.8	(17)	82.5	(241)	3.8	(11)	7.9	(23)	292

TABLE A16: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (b) whether the child or children in question believe that magical effects e.g. Superman flying; animals flying in Never Ending Story can happen in real life.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	8.2	(10)	53.7	(65)	24.8	(30)	13.2	(16)	(121)
Teacher	16.2	(20)	34.9	(43)	38.2	(47)	10.6	(13)	(123)
Child	6.2	(18)	93.5	(273)		(0)	.3	(1)	(292)

TABLE A17: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (c) whether the child or children in question believe that actors or characters e.g. Nurse Loveday in A Country Practice; families in Neighbours continue to be those people or characters in their real life (when not on television).

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	31.9	(37)	31.0	(36)	19.0	(22)	18.1	(21)	(116)
Teacher	51.2	(64)	4.8	(6)	29.6	(37)	14.4	(18)	(125)
Child	18.2	(53)	70.4	(205)	0	(0)	11.4	(33)	(291)

TABLE A18: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (d) whether the child or children in question believe that ugly creatures e.g. creatures in Dr. Who; Vincent the Beast in Beauty and the Beast; and Frankenstein actually exist in the real world.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	7.6	(9)	52.9	(63)	25.2	(30)	14.3	(17)	(119)
Teacher	19.2	(24)	28.	(35)	40.8	(51)	12	(15)	(125)
Child	6.8	(20)	90.8	(265)	0	(0)	2.4	(7)	(292)

TABLE A19: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (e) whether the child or children in question believe that actors fighting in television stories are just pretending.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	42.4	(50)	16.1	(19)	30.5	(36)	11.0	(13)	(118)
Teacher	19.2	(24)	39.2	(49)	29.6	(37)	12.0	(15)	(125)
Child	64.7	(189)	31.8	(93)	0	(0)	3.4	(10)	(292)

TABLE A20: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (f) whether the child or children in question believe that people injured in television stories are just pretending.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	37.8	(45)	23.5	(28)	26.9	(32)	11.8	(14)	(119)
Teacher	16.0	(20)	38.4	(48)	32.0	(40)	13.6	(17)	(125)
Child	68.8	(201)	22.9	(67)	0	(0)	8.2	(24)	(292)

TABLE A21: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (g) whether the child or children in question believe that people fighting in television news items and sport are just pretending.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	TOTAL n=
Parent	4.2	(5)	70.6	(84)	10.1	(12)	15.1	(18)	(119)
Teacher	4.9	(6)	65.6	(80)	14.8	(18)	14.7	(18)	(122)
Child	25.7	(75)	69.5	(203)	0	(0)	4.8	(14)	(292)

TABLE A22: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (h) whether the child or children in question believe that people injured in television news items are just pretending.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	3.4	(4)	74.8	(89)	5.9	(7)	15.9	(19)	(119)
Teacher	7.3	(9)	66.1	(82)	14.5	(18)	12.1	(15)	(124)
Child	15.1	(44)	81.5	(238)	0	(0)	3.4	(10)	(292)

TABLE A23: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (i) whether the child or children in question believe that live dramatic stories on television e.g. A Country Practice, G.P. are true stories.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	28.0	(30)	27.1	(29)	29.9	(32)	15.0	(16)	(107)
Teacher	51.2	(64)	12.0	(15)	28.0	(35)	8.8	(11)	(125)
Child	26.1	(76)	70.4	(205)	0	0	3.4	(10)	(291)

TABLE A24: Parents, teachers and children's response to: (j) whether the child or children in question believe that news stories are true stories.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	76.7	(92)	4.2	(5)	10.8	(13)	8.3	(10)	(120)
Teacher	74.8	(92)	2.4	(3)	13.8	(17)	8.9	(11)	(123)
Child	85.0	(239)	11.4	(32)	0	(0)	3.6	(10)	(281)

TABLE A25: Parents', teachers' and children's response to: (k) whether the child or children in question believe that normal human beings could participate in dangerous activities e.g. falling from buildings, car crashes etc normally performed by stuntmen without being harmed.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	11.7	(14)	51.7	(62)	17.5	(21)	19.1	(23)	(120)
Teacher	24.2	(30)	32.3	(40)	29.8	(37)	13.7	(17)	(124)
Child	18.8	(55)	77.7	(227)	0	(0)	3.4	(10)	(292)

TABLE A26: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (l) whether the child or children in question believe that actors and people on television stay inside the television set (or disappear) when you turn off the television.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	5.0	(6)	82.6	(100)	3.3	(4)	9.1	(11)	(121)
Teacher	6.5	(8)	55.6	(69)	16.9	(21)	20.9	(26)	(124)
Child	3.8	(11)	93.5	0	0		2.7	(8)	(291)

TABLE A27: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (m) whether the child or children in question believe that Sooty, Sweep and Sue (hand puppets) are real human beings.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	9.9	(12)	83.5	(101)	5.0	(6)	1.6	(2)	(121)
Teacher	5.6	(7)	72.8	(91)	13.6	(17)	8.0	(10)	(125)
Child	3.1	(9)	96.9	(283)	0	0	0	0	(292)

TABLE A28: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (n) whether the child or children in question believe that Fat Cat is a real cat.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	8.5	(10)	88.1	(104)	2.5	(3)	.8	(1)	(118)
Teacher	8.1	(10)	65.3	(81)	16.1	(20)	10.5	(13)	(124)
Child	2.1	(6)	97.6	(285)	0	(0)	.3	(1)	(292)

TABLE A29: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (o) whether the child or children in question believe that talking cartoon animals e.g. Dot and the Koala are real talking animals.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	6.7	(8)	80.8	(97)	5.8	(7)	6.7	(8)	(120)
Teacher	10.4	(13)	54.4	(68)	20.8	(26)	14.4	(18)	(125)
Child	1.0	(3)	99.0	(289)	0	(0)	0	(0)	(292)

TABLE A30: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (p) whether the child or children in question believe Gumby (an animated clay character) is a real person.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	5.1	(6)	90.7	(107)	.8	(1)	3.4	(4)	(118)
Teacher	1.6	(2)	73.4	(91)	7.3	(9)	17.7	(22)	(124)
Child	.7	(2)	99.0	(289)	0	0	.3	(1)	(292)

TABLE A31: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (q) whether the child or children in question believe that advertisements are designed to influence people to buy particular products.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	43.8	(53)	29.8	(36)	7.4	(9)	19.0	(23)	(121)
Teacher	21.6	(27)	43.2	(54)	17.6	(22)	17.6	(22)	(125)
Child	52.3	(145)	7.6	(21)	0	0	40.1	(111)	(277)

TABLE A32: Parents', teachers' and children's responses to: (r) whether the child or children in question believe that children on television e.g. Cosby children in The Cosby Show; Chloe or other children in A Country Practice are happier than themselves.

	yes		no		sometimes		unsure		
	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	TOTAL n=
Parent	7.8	(9)	65.2	(75)	7.0	(8)	20.0	(23)	(115)
Teacher	20.0	(25)	20.8	(26)	25.6	(32)	33.6	(42)	(125)
Child	28.9	(84)	63.9	(186)	1.4	(4)	5.8	(17)	(291)